The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

JAMES LANDBERG

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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[This interview was not edited by Mr. Landberg]

Q: This is an interview with James Landberg. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. You go by Jim?

LANDBERG: Yes.

Q: Jim, let's start at the beginning. Could you tell me when and where you were born?

LANDBERG: I was born in Seattle, Washington, June 4, 1936.

Q: Tell me a little bit about your father and then your mother.

LANDBERG: Well, my father was the son of a Swedish immigrant. He was in the electrical construction business in Seattle and in Washington state in general. My mother, whose name was Johnson, was the descendant of Ray English Caunus on her father's side. He came in 1620/1630 to Massachusetts. Her mother was born in Germany and came as an infant to Minnesota or North Dakota.

Q: Did any of the Swedish or the German/English background have any influence on how you grew up? Was this part of the background or not?

LANDBERG: Well, we were poor. My Swedish grandfather died before I was born. I think basically I knew about immigrant stock. We went to the Swedish picnics. All my grandmother's friends were Swedes who had come over around the turn of the century like she had. But it's hard to say? I grew up in a suburb or a far out part of Seattle and then grew up near the university district. I went to high school in the university district. I went to the University of Washington. I think it made me sensitive to foreign immigrants and the fact that people had foreign?

Q: Had either of your parents gone to college?

LANDBERG: No, nobody had gone to college in my family before I did. I was the oldest of my generation.

Q: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

LANDBERG: Just a sister.

Q: You went to school in a suburb of Seattle?

LANDBERG: No, it was in Seattle. At the time, Seattle was a much smaller town. It wasn't a suburb. It was in Seattle proper, but it was out on the outskirts.

Q: How did you find elementary school there?

LANDBERG: I went to a really nice eight grade school. I was just out there and I went by there and the whole building was torn down. They had built a brand new school on the same place. There was a large eight grade school. It was good. I had good memories of the eighth grade.

Q: Were there any teachers that you recall?

LANDBERG: Mrs. Akin. I remember some of the teachers there.

Q: What subjects particularly interested you?

LANDBERG: Math. I liked mathematics a lot. I read a lot. I read an immense amount.

Q: What kind of books?

LANDBERG: I don't remember. Books about animals. I started reading fiction stuff. I remember reading things like "The Rauz" from the time I was 14 or 15 years old.

Q: When you went to high school, it was in Seattle?

LANDBERG: I went to West Seattle two years and then we moved out to the university district. I graduated from Roosevelt High School, which is the high school closest to the university. It had a very high percentage of kids that went to college.

Q: In high school, did you concentrate in any particular courses?

LANDBERG: No, I wouldn't say so. I took a well rounded thing. I had originally intended to go to college and study and go into engineering. But at the last moment, I realized that that wasn't what I really wanted to do. So, I went into the School of Journalism and then I switched to the School of Political Science and got my degree in political science.

Q: You were at the University of Washington from when to when?

LANDBERG: 1954-1960. I worked for the whole time except the last year.

Q: What type of work were you doing?

LANDBERG: When I first started there, I was working for a printing company in downtown Seattle. I had been working there since I was 16. Then I went to work for Boeing in 1955. Boeing was a great place to work because I could work night shift. So, I worked nights at Boeing most of the time for four years. Then I saved up enough money to quit Boeing. I went through school much more slowly then normal. Then the last year, I quit and went full-time and finished up that year.

Q: What sort of work were you doing at Boeing?

LANDBERG: I worked mostly for receiving, which was where all the materials come into Boeing. I did all kinds of things, everything from? But for several of the years, I ran a little receiving area in a huge warehouse in the evening. They did most of the work during the daytime. They had a big staff. But at night they needed somebody to be there if trucks came in late or if there was something that had to be expedited. I also did primitive record keeping, where you took IBM cards and a crunch machine. I learned how to type really fast on that. Then that also gave me time to study. That's what I did until the year before I graduated.

Q: Did you get at all interested in the politics of the area around Seattle?

LANDBERG: Oh, yes. I was in the Democratic Party and I did precinct work. But almost all of the time I was in college, I worked, almost always nights. In the summertime, sometimes I got put on a day shift. But the rest of the time, I worked nights. But I did precinct work and stuff like that.

Q: I take it working as you did, you probably didn't get too involved in student activities.

LANDBERG: I didn't very much. That's true. I was a member of a fraternity and lived there part of the time. To the extent I could be, I was active in that, but if I had not been working nights, I would have? But I was still involved in a few things. Don't ask me what they are because I don't remember, but I remember I did some stuff.

Q: You moved to the School of Political Science?

LANDBERG: Yes.

Q: Were you concentrating on any particular field?

LANDBERG: No. I was really interested in government. I was interested in municipal government a lot. I did a lot of papers and got to know some of the people in the Seattle government. Seattle at the time had a strong city council, a weak mayor. So, the city was really run by this wonderful old president of the city council. He was the most influential. He was a very interesting fellow. I did some stuff for the city there, time permitting. Especially my last year when I didn't work, I had more time to do stuff like that.

Q: Did international affairs intrude at all?

LANDBERG: Oh, yes. There was a professor there who had taken a major role in the writing of the Japanese constitution after the war. He was a very interesting fellow. He taught international relations. As I recall, Hans Morgenthau's textbook on international relations was a great textboo"Power Among Nations." I was very much influenced by that book and by him. But I didn't have any particular interest in international affairs more so than any other aspect of political science at the time.

Q: You graduated in 1960.

LANDBERG: Yes. I went to Guatemala with a friend. Actually, I was renting a room from the mother of a fraternity brother. Her daughter was in Guatemala on a Smith-Mundt fellowship, so I went to Guatemala with her and spent the summer in Guatemala.

Q: What was Guatemala like then?

LANDBERG: Pretty humdrum. We traveled all over the place. We took the bus to Quezaltenango, all over the country. There was no insurgency going on. There wasn't a security problem. But out in the countryside, people were really poor. This woman's daughter had a Guatemalan friend whose parents had been killed in an automobile accident. He had been studying in the States and he was owner of a coffee finca which was in the western highlands. He invited me there and I went and spent about a month in his coffee finca. We traveled by horseback all through that area. Later, my son had an assignment in El Salvador and we spent Christmas there and went up to Guatemala. Of course, Guatemala City is just like Santo Domingo, gigantic now compared to then when it was a little tiny town. I took my wife downtown. We went down to the central market. I was living right near there but I couldn't figure out where it was. Guatemala City is just a huge place. So, it was pretty small. Of course, they were training the people for the Cuban invasion there.

Q: Which ended up being the Bay of Pigs.

LANDBERG: Yes. I wasn't aware of that.

Q: Here you graduated. What was in store for you?

LANDBERG: I was totally broke when I got back to the States. I had like $25. I went to San Francisco. I had a fraternity brother there and got a job at Wells Fargo Bank. While I was working for Wells Fargo at a pittance, San Francisco was just a great place to live. So, I was living hand to mouth, but I took the Federal Government Management Intern exam. I passed that. So, I had an offer of a government position and took it. So, I was only in San Francisco a year. I came out in the summer of 1961 and went to work for the Bureau of Naval Weapons in the Navy Department.

Q: You did that from when to when?

LANDBERG: '61-'63. One of my roommates in San Francisco went into the Foreign Service. My office was just down the street on the Mall. I was in one of those buildings. So, I used to come up and have lunch with him all the time.

Q: These were temporary buildings that are where the Vietnam Memorial is now.

LANDBERG: Yes. They were built during the first world war to be temporary. They were taken down under Johnson. They were taken down under Lyndon Johnson sometime in the '60s. Anyway, my Foreign Service friend said that the Foreign Service exam was coming up. So, it must have been in '62 that I took the Foreign Service exam and went into the Foreign Service.

Q: Did you have any feel for the Foreign Service before you took the exam?

LANDBERG: Well, because my friend was in the Foreign Service. Unlike most junior officers, his first assignment was in Washington. So, since I socialized with him and his wife a lot? When I first came to Washington, they were the only people I knew in Washington. So, I got to know a lot of his A100 colleagues and knew they were going off to overseas posts and stuff like that.

Q: When you took the oral exam, do you recall any of the questions?

LANDBERG: They asked me something like if I knew anything about foreign affairs. I said, "Well, not much." So, they asked me what were the four countries that made up what used to be French Indochina. It was like they held their breath to see if I could answer that very basic question. I guess if I had failed that question, I wouldn't have passed. That's the only question I remember because of the feeling that this was a make or break question.

Q: I was just reading one account of somebody who was asked to name the countries of SEATO. He came up with Japan, Hong Kong, India, and one other. He was told he had done a remarkable job, that he had not gotten one of them correct. This was Dick Howland.

You came into the Foreign Service when?

LANDBERG: It seems to me it was sometime in early or mid-'63. It must have been about late summer of 1963. I think I was in the Navy Department almost exactly two years and I started there August of '61.

Q: What type of work were you doing in the Navy Department?

LANDBERG: I was a budget analyst. I was afraid the State Department would put me into a budget job. Actually, it was a great job for me. The budget really drives management and the Defense Department. The Office of Program and Budget for the Office of Research and Development Division of the Bureau of Weapons, a bureau that failed. It was made up of the Bureau of Aviation and the Bureau of Ordinance. They made it into one gigantic, huge bureau with a $10 billion budget, which was a lot of money in 1961. It was unmanageable. So, eventually, they split it up again. But it was very interesting. We did the program budget for a $500 million research and development program. I worked for a while in what they called Special Operations, which was the program that developed the Polaris missile, which was very famous because they had developed the management system... It was a very famous system that was very expensive to operate to integrate systems very rapidly. So they developed and built the Polaris missile submarine and missile in a couple of years. This was incredible. So, I worked there for a while. I worked over in the Pentagon in the Chief of Naval Operations Division. Most of the time, I worked in the Budget Office. Budget is really important in the Defense Department because it drives what's done. But I had the impression that that's not the case in the State Department. So, I didn't emphasize that to anybody because I didn't want to be sucked into that kind of job.

Q: You started your class in the fall of '63?

LANDBERG: Yes. Actually, they didn't have space, so I worked for two months for a lovely fellow in the Office of Supply and Transportation. His name was D. Parris and he became the head of the Passport Division years later. So, I worked there two months. It was a fun initial job. Then I went into A100. It must have been in sometime in the fall that I went into the A100 course.

Q: One always looks at one's fellow junior officers. What were they like?

LANDBERG: Very much of a mix from people like me who had practically never been overseas to people who had studied overseas. There was at least one staff fellow who had been in Africa. I think he had to leave for health reasons. He picked up all kinds of awful stuff in Africa. The rest of them were just a broad based group of people. A few made ambassadors and most didn't.

Q: Any women, minorities?

LANDBERG: There were, but almost all the women were USIA. We did the joint USIS and State? As I recall, the women with one possible exception were in USIA. We had a class of about 45 or 50 and there were about six women.

Q: Were you married at the time?

LANDBERG: I got married that year just a week after Kennedy's assassination in November. I was done with the A100 but I can't remember if I was in language training. I took Spanish language training after I took the consular course.

Q: What was the background of your wife?

LANDBERG: She is from Illinois, three quarters Norwegian, one quarter Swedish. She was teaching school in Alexandria. She had come to Washington about the same time I did and we met at a Lutheran church in downtown Washington. So, she was willing to give up her career, something people don't do today. We thought that she had a good chance to be able to teach overseas, which was certainly the case. In Santo Domingo, she taught at a school.

Q: When you were in the A100 course, were you pointing towards some area?

LANDBERG: No, I wasn't really. I was too naive to do that.

Q: Did you have any language under your belt?

LANDBERG: No, except I had spent that summer in Guatemala. So, I had a little Spanish. Of course, I had studied French in college. But in terms of real? That was the extent of it.

Q: How did the Kennedy assassination hit you all?

LANDBERG: I was sitting at FSI at lunchtime when that happened. No, I was in language class. I was waiting for class to start. It must have been sometime between 12:00 and 1:00 pm. A guy came running in the door and said, "Kennedy's been shot!" So, they canceled class. My wife and I rented the apartment of this friend of mine who was in the Foreign Service. He and his wife had gone to Romania. So, we rented their apartment in Arlington. I was driving home and I heard on the radio that the President was dead. I don't know if that was Walter Cronkite. I remember sobbing. I went home and watched it for a while. People said, "Don't have the wedding" and all that kind of stuff. Well, of course, we did. We didn't feel that there was a reason not to get married. So, I wouldn't say that it had an overwhelming effect.

Q: I was just wondering whether because so many people came they mobilized some of the junior officers to help with protocol events.

LANDBERG: No, not that I'm aware of.

Q: Your first assignment was to the Dominican Republic. You were there when?

LANDBERG: I went in April of '64. I left in June of '66.

Q: What was Santo Domingo like?

LANDBERG: A sleepy little place of about 250,000, but the downtown area was fairly small. There were these barrios that were growing. We got to know a lot of people who lived in those barrios with no running water. People had a spigot in their neighborhood and they'd go down with a bucket to get water. It was very poor and it was very unstable. Trujillo had been assassinated in 1961. The Trujillo regime was incredibly brutal and murdered and tortured its enemies. It was a reign of terror, especially the last years of Trujillo when he was clearly beginning to falter. People had been terrorized in the last four or five years of that regime. A lot of people had been murdered and had disappeared, so people were extremely concerned, to say the least. To get out of the country under Trujillo, you had to pay an exorbitant amount for a passport. Only the very wealthy? The wealthy people tried to send their daughters overseas to study because of this rapacious guy who wanted to sleep with all the young women in the country.

Q: It was his son or brother?

LANDBERG: Trujillo himself. Then he had this awful family. They were immensely wealthy and he had taken over virtually all the valuable property in the countrthe beer factory, almost all the sugar companies, all belonged directly to Trujillo. The automobile outlets? He just took over everything. If he was big enough, you couldn't refuse. He would buy you out. So, the country had been terrorized and brutalized and was still getting over that. They had a civilian triumvirate running the government when I got there. Then the triumvirate sort of dissolved and one of the members, Donald Reed Cabral, became the head of the government with the backing of part of the military. Given the nature of the kind of politics they had had, there were constant efforts to overthrow him or they were plotting against him. I was just a junior officer in the consular section the first year.

I left out one thing. After Trujillo went, they had elections and Juan Bosch was elected president. He was overthrown by the military and then this triumvirate came in. The ambassador at the time, John Bartlow Martin, wrote a great book in which he revealed how much the U.S. really manipulated and influenced things and to some extent had something to do with Juan Bosch's political demise.

Q: What was the problem with Bosch?

LANDBERG: They wouldn't do what Martin wanted them to do. So, Martin became more and more strange. Juan Bosch was more leftist than the U.S. liked. Of course, this was after Cuba. We were very concerned about leftist government. So, he became estranged and Martin let him fall and pushed him a little bit. So, when I got there, the triumvirate had been established. Juan Bosch was gone. John Bartlow Martin was gone. W. Tapley (Tap) Bennett was the ambassador, a very nice, patrician, Georgian fellow from a wealthy family, a very nice guy. There were constant efforts within the Dominican military, constant plotting? These people had all grown up under the Trujillo regime in which there was a lot of internal intrigue going on. So, there was a lot of effort to gain control of the government. The military were pretty corrupt. The country was having serious economic problems. For example, in our apartment, we had no water for about a year during the day. We'd get a little bit of water in the night. We'd leave all the water faucets on and jump out of bed and take showers in the middle of the night. It was one of those things where you couldn't believe it would go on, but it went on. The government was having a really hard time keeping its economic head above water. The U.S. was providing assistance, but it insisted on reforms. A lot was happening, but it wasn't enough for the U.S. We kept the screws tightened on them. What happened was, the government simply went broke and stopped paying workers. I found out later by going out into the country that the public works teachers and so on had not been paid for four months. It was an explosive situation. It exploded. A civil war broke out. A lot of people out in the country, especially young male teachers and stuff, came in and joined the rebels.

Q: What was your job when you went out there?

LANDBERG: I went to the consular section. But John Bartlow Martin felt that one way to relieve the pressures in the country was to let all the Dominicans emigrate to the U.S. So, they started issuing visas like hotcakes. So, they needed a lot of vice consuls. I was one of the group? There had always been a large number of vice consuls sent down there and I was in the second tranche of vice consuls sent to DR to help process all these visa applicants. There were lines when I got there at the consulate, which was a separate building from the main embassy.

Q: Where were they going in the U.S.?

LANDBERG: New York.

Q: Did you get any feel for what sort of work they would do when they got there?

LANDBERG: Sweatshops. They rented apartments and put four or five families in an apartment and worked in the textile industry and sent a lot of money back.

Q: Were our people getting out and looking at the situation and saying that it was getting explosive?

LANDBERG: I was in the consular section the first year. It was supposed to be a rotational? What they did there, you really only got two rotations. So, I was rotated after one year into the economic section, which was also in a separate building from the main embassy. It was across the street from the main embassy. So, in April, I moved to the economic section. I had only been there a couple of weeks when the government fell. We worked our tails off in the consular section. My wife said that I and my close friend who did immigrant visas lost about 20 pounds each of us because it was really hectic work. We had an immense amount of fraud. The situation was ludicrous, but we had a waiting list of like 25,000 visa applicants. My friend decided that a lot of those people had already gotten into the States. It took a lot of work to maintain this waiting list. They would tell somebody, "Your turn has come up" and they'd send a letter out and there would be no response. They wouldn't show. So, you'd have to go to other people and all this kind of stuff. We had a huge staff of local employees maintaining this waiting list. People were probably successfully trying to pay off our locals to get earlier on the list. So, we decided that a lot of those people weren't there, so we sent out a huge mass mailing to all 25,000 that said, "Your time has come. Send us your initial documents and we'll give you an appointment." Right away, about 15,000 people disappeared from the list. They had already gotten non-immigrant visas and made their way to New York. So, we reduced the workload tremendously. Then we processed those 10,000 very quickly. I was there for six months. We reduced that waiting list from 25,000 to 3-4,000 in six months.

Q: That must have given you great pleasure.

LANDBERG: It was kind of a fun thing to do. After thinking about it and looking at it, we decided that we could do that. Then I moved to non-immigrant visas, which is every bit as intense with lines of people going out the door.

Q: What would you do? Did you develop a feel for who's legitimate and who's not?

LANDBERG: We had 30 second allowances. My son, interestingly enough, his first assignment was to Santo Domingo in the consular section. When he was there, they had develop a quota. You had to interview so many people. It was well over 100 people a day, 100 or 140. You just make these instant decisions. I always felt that consular assignments for junior officers are an excellent training device because you're making instant decisions based on how somebody looks and what they say in 30 seconds and you learn how to do that. It's good training.

Q: What happened during this revolt?

LANDBERG: It's a long story. I had just moved to the economic section. The revolt broke out on a Saturday. As I recall, it was about April 25th of 1965. You asked about what the embassy had been doing. There had been reported coup attempts or plotting for months and months. The embassy political section was deeply engaged in heading those off and trying to keep them from coming about. That weekend, however, nothing was expected to happen. So, the ambassador went to the U.S. Also, the AID mission director had left the country. The head of the military assistance, whose job it was to assist their military and professionalize them, had left. The top leadership in the embassy was out of the country. Apparently, there was not a planned coup that weekend, but one of the military guys in the government got word of coup plotters and he went out and confronted them at a base just outside Santo Domingo. Since he went alone, they took him prisoner and launched their coup on the spur of the moment. This military group of rebels went down and took over the TV station and announced that they had overthrown the government. So, it instantly became public knowledge. A lot of people in this government were not being paid their salaries. They knew that Donald Reid Cabral was only held in place by a bunch of crooks in the military. So, a lot of people went to the rebels to get support, had access to an armory, and they just handed out weapons. The people took to the streets. Fighting broke out between the military and all these civilians plus military rebels. For a week or so, it was a real civil war in which several thousand people were killed, many of them in the crossfire. The air force joined the thing and was flying over Santo Domingo bombing and strafing the town, so it was really a chaotic situation.

Q: What were you doing?

LANDBERG: The economic section went out of business right away. In fact, the rebels broke into the section. Right away, a decision was made to try to evacuate. There were a lot of Americans, not only just official Americans, but there were businesspeople and that kind of thinnot a lot, but there were several thousand American citizens there and then there were a number of other foreign citizens. I and my junior officer friends spent most of our time evacuating people. I drove a truck, picked up people in cars and trucks, and drove them up to the? I have a picture that was on the cover of Life Magazine showing all the Americans lying on the ground because a firefight broke out between the two groups at the hotel. So, we established a kind of evacuation center at this big hotel just on the outskirts of town. I did all kinds of stuff. I manned the telephone for quite a while, talking to Americans and arranging for embassy drivers to go pick them up. The embassy drivers were really brave. They went into town. P51s were flying around shooting. There was firing going on at the drivers. People were stuck and couldn't get out. We sent a driver down to pick them up. We arranged with the military to give an escort to take them out to Haina, which was a port on the outskirts of town. Ships came in there. The U.S. navy parked its fleet offshore. I remember driving a busload of people out to Haina at least once. We processed people. We must have had some forms or something. We evacuated several thousand people. I worked also in the main embassy. I was co-opted into the political section, which is where we ran this effort to find stranded American citizens. We did it there because the consular section was away from the embassy and it also became unsafe there. There was a lot of military and police in that area, so there was a lot of fighting in the area. So, the consular section went out of business, too. So, all of those people in the consular section and people who had recently been there like myself turned to helping to evacuate people. My wife and I had a neighbor, this friend of mine? He and I had been in the immigrant visa section. His wife was about eight and a half months pregnant. So, we decided that if she had to evacuate that my wife would go with her because she needed assistance. So, one day, the fighting was really getting very heavy. I can't remember how the decision was made, but they decided my friend's wife ought to go. So, my wife evacuated with her and went out. At that point, they took all of the dependents out, all but one wife. My wife went on the Boxer, the aircraft carrier. One of the things that I did, at some point I became kind of a liaison on the radio between the embassy and the fleet. Believe it or not, there was no way for the radios in the embassy to communicate with the fleet. So, this friend of mine from USIA was a ham radio operator and he put his ham radio in his car and brought it to the embassy. He was able to communicate with it. Part of the problem was that the electricity went out. Right away, it went down. So, you couldn't pump gas? It was a wonderful picture of society shutting down. There was no garbage collection because there was no gasoline. There was no electricity, so everybody's refrigerators and everything went kaput.

This car was out in the yard and I became the message carrier between the embassy and the car. Then I talked on the phone to some person on the fleet and I actually called in the Marines. There is a hilarious story that I hope my memory is correct on. I was sitting out in the car with my friend-

Q: The power source being the battery working on the car.

LANDBERG: Yes, but there was a problem. He actually had the motor on, but it was idling and the batteries run down. So, we took the batteries out of all the cars we could find and we also stole all the gasoline out of the cars at the Embajador Hotel because we needed gasoline to run the generators. All these people had driven there to evacuate and left their cars there. So, I had a team of Peace Corps volunteers and had them drain all the gasoline out of all these cars because we needed it for the generators. It turns out that if you just idle the car and use the power, the battery runs out. There were other cars around, so we had to keep stealing batteries out of these cars.

The DCM, William Connett, was the chargï¿½ when this call broke out. The ambassador could not get back. The airport shut down, so he was not able to come back. So, Connett was in charge. He was under great pressure. Then when the ambassador came back? I was in the embassy a lot because I was serving as a liaison and I heard the ambassador talking to President Johnson. I didn't really quite understand what was said. Apparently, they agreed that the only thing to do was? When the ambassador got back, he tried to negotiated a settlement, but neither side would agree because who was winning the battle kept shifting from hour to hour. The ambassador was very suspicious of the rebels. He felt there were communists amongst them and that they were getting Cuban support and everything. The last thing the Johnson administration wanted was another Cuba. So, they agreed that when it looked like the military started collapsing under this. The people hated the military, so more and more people were joining the rebels. They were beginning to prevail. So, the U.S. decided that we had another Cuba on our hands. They had it all set up. They had Marines on these carriers and they decided that we should intervene. So, Connett came out. We had an awful time with code words and everything. Communications were all bollixed up and we had worked out some code words for what to do through Washington. By the time the U.S. intervened, which was about a week after the scene had broken out, all kinds of reporters had gotten into the country. There was no electricity and therefore no air conditioning. It was hot as blazes. By this time, it was about the first of May. It was hotter than hell inside so nobody wanted to be inside that building. So, everybody stood out in front. There were all these reporters out there, so Connett came out there. He came out to the car, which was about 50 yards from the front yard. He said, "Send them the message to send in the Marines." I picked up the phone. We had worked out a code thing and I said the magic words. They said, "Yes, Sir" and hung it up. Connett turned around and started walking. He said, "This is top secret. All these reporters were not supposed to know." He started walking back towards the steps of the embassy. There were about four or five steps. There were about 50 people standing on the front. Just as he gets up to the steps? So, I followed him. There was nothing else for me to do. All of a sudden, my USIS friend in the car comes running across the lawn and yells, "Hey, they want to know how many Marines to send." So, that publicized it pretty well right at that moment. I remember Connett sort of freezing. What else can go wrong?

So they send in the Marines. This is a story I've only heard but I assume it's true that there was a fellow in the embassy that I worked for in the economic section. He was a brilliant middle grade officer named John Bushnell who should have become Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs, but he only became acting for some time. He is a fairly little, short, slender fellow. The story is that he was out at the Embajador Hotel polo grounds when the first Marine helicopters came in. The story is, John was standing there and a helicopter landed and Marines jumped off and came running forward, and fell on the ground. A guy looked up at John and said, "Hey, Bud, which way is the American embassy?" There were a lot of AID cars there. They had been helping with evacuation. They filled the cars with Marines and drove to the embassy. I was out there in the yard in front. That's where the radio was. So, I was out when they arrived. I'll never forget them coming through the gate of the embassy, which was on the corner and had a little, low wall. There must have been three squads or platoons. One squad laid down in front of one wall and put their guns over it. The other went running around the back of the building. Then in a few seconds, somebody barked some orders and the guy that was in front of the wall jumped up and they ran around in the back. The guys in the back ran around to the front. They ran right through each other. It was like the Keystone Cops. They plunked themselves down and were pointing. Then, they did it a second time. They all jumped up and the guys in the back ran to the front and the guys in the front ran to the back. They ran through each other. I was standing there by the car watching this incredible thing. They did this because there was some firing coming at the embassy.

Q: What was your feeling and that of your fellow officers about calling in the Marines? Later on, this became quite controversial.

LANDBERG: The country was in total chaos. People were being killed in the streets. Society had broken down. There was no gasoline and no electricity, no food delivery, no garbage pickup. There was a town of 250,000 people. For a few days, it didn't make any difference, but people started going out to look for food and getting caught in the crossfire. My landlord's brother, totally innocent, had gone out of his house and got hit by a stray bullet and killed. There were bodies all over the place.

Ken Blakley was in the administrative section and he and I took a trip up to the embassy warehouse to try to find some food for people. There were bodies all over the place by the warehouse. So, it was total anarchy. Plus, the two sides were fighting throughout the city and all over the place. I think it was well justified. I hate to think what would have happened if we hadn't stepped in and stopped this killing. A lot of people would have started starving to death or died of disease. There was no water either. By and large, the water system hadn't run very well, so people didn't have any water, any food, or any electricity. Of course, I think the main motive was political, but it seems to me it also stepped in and stopped a catastrophe.

I think Bosnia is a good example of when you don't do anything. Look at what happened in Sarajevo. Several hundred thousand people probably died because nobody was willing to step in and stop it.

Q: The Marines came in. What was your and the embassy's role then? The 101st Airborne came in, too, didn't it?

LANDBERG: Yes. The Marines came and then the Army came in.

I did so many things it's hard to list them all. I did two things. One of the things I did was, I got headquarters? Somebody in the embassy told me we had to arrange for headquarters for the Marines and for the Airborne. Right next door to the embassy was the Agrarian Reform Institute, which used to be Trujillo's palace. There was a hotel called the Hispaniola Hotel. I knew a lot about it because a Peace Corps staff person lived in my little apartment building and he was going with a daughter of the manager. I thought that hotel belonged to the Dominican government and that it would be ideal for the Marines since it was right there by the Embajador Hotel. I knew they were going broke. There were no tourists, to say the least. They also had a generator. They had cold beer besides that. It seemed to me that that would be an ideal place. When they told me this, standing right next to the guy that told me to arrange for headquarters was John Wayne. There was a Marine colonel who looked exactly like John Wayne. They had established this military junta at the military airport outside of Santo Domingo. So, John Wayne and I went in and got on a helicopter and flew to the airport. It was just before dusk. As we flew in, you could see a line of C130s landing. There was one just turning off the apron. There was one landing. There was a line of C130s out of sight to the horizon. That was the Airborne arriving at that airport. We went in there. I found the president of the junta, a little colonel. Before I left, I typed up this thing that said that the Dominican government gives the Hispaniola Hotel to the U.S. as the headquarters for the United States Marines for the duration of hostilities and also the Agrarian Reform Institute. So, I had this one thing to loan us these two buildings. He procrastinated. He called some major in and said, "Go find out about the Agrarian Reform Institute." Well, there was war occurring between there and downtown, so I said that I was ready to sign for the U.S. government. He looked at me and picked up his pen and signed this decree. I signed it. Unfortunately, I signed it in a way that he could read my name. It turned out the Hispaniola Hotel belonged to an American. So, we flew back. John Wayne got his troops into the biggest dump truck I've ever seen in my life. They had guns sticking out on all sides. They were going to start off to go occupy the hotel. Right across the street was a police station. I knew that the police had barricaded themselves and were shooting at anything dangerous. I said, "This isn't a good idea. They're going to be scared as hell when they see us come down." So, we just got into an AID car. There was a Peace Corps guy driving an AID car. John Wayne and I? We had brought a Dominican major, a little shrimp of a guy, with us. He had the decree that I had written and signed. We got in this car and we drove down to the hotel and drove into the parking lot. Sitting at the door of the hotel was a Dominican soldier. He had his rifle across his knees. We all got out of the car and everybody got behind me, including John Wayne. So, I just walked right by the guy and said, "Hola, que tal [Spanish: Hi, how are you?]." The guy looked up at me and said, "Hello" and we walked right in. The manager, who I knew, came out. I gave the decree to the major and the major read this decree that said "You've been occupied by the Marines." Then the Marines came down and took over this hotel and set it up. As I say, it turned out that it didn't belong to the Dominican government. Some American woman ultimately chased me for months and months to try to find out why I had taken over her hotel. Of course, it saved the hotel in the long run.

Q: Well, they were paid, weren't they?

LANDBERG: Yes. The Marines moved in and they took it over and they paid them and settled with them and all that kind of stuff. Of course, the original decree didn't say anything about compensation. It just said it was given to them. So, the Defense Department tried to stiff this woman for a long time, but I think she finally got paid.

Then, what happened was, they formed teams to go out into the countryside and distribute food. The country was in a catastrophic economic state. Food distribution had come to a halt. People hadn't been paid. There was no money. I went with one of these teams to San Francisco de Marcoris and we went in and organized food distribution. We bought food from Santo Domingo. I paid salaries. A guy flew in with a C ration box full of $100-200,000 equivalent of Dominican money, which was 1:1 at the time. I went around to these little towns and would walk into the local Banco Enricolad or whatever. The public works people and teachers and everything got a piece of paper that said they had worked so many days and what their salary was. They brought it in and we paid their salaries. The idea was to get the economy moving. Then we distributed food. We had to evacuate. We left town one day because of threats on our life, but we came back after local people assured us that they weren't credible threats. That lasted about a week or 10 days and that kind of calmed down the hinterland. Then I came back and the food for peace fellow for AID had quit. He said emergency relief wasn't his specialty. So, he quit. They put me in charge of bringing all the food in. I was paying hundreds of thousands of dollars a day in demurrage. They sent all these ships full of food. They sent fuel also. They went them down there and I paid the demurrage [time in port before they can unload]? The port was under rebel control, so they could only come into Haida, which only had space for a couple of boats. They were sitting off the coast. Then I worked with Lutheran Brotherhood, Catholic Relief Services, and somebody else, and they actually did the distribution. I was one of the few Americans that went into the rebel zone. They had set up kind of a perimeter around the downtown part of town which was held by the rebels. We distributed food there, too. So, I went down into the rebel zone to supervise distribution of food.

Q: What was the situation on the ground?

LANDBERG: It was awful. The thing I remember most is that once they cordoned off downtown, effectively trapping the rebel people there - when I say "cordoned off," U.S. military fought their way across town from this airporand set up a cordon around it so nobody could get in or out without military permission. On the outskirts of town, there were these barrios. There were a lot of rebels out there. Effectively, they set up a kind of rejuvenated Dominican military. They went out and shot the hell out of these barrios. My wife had come back by then and was teaching in a school. They decided to reopen the school. I was up at her school and you could hear all this machinegun fire day and night. It went on for three or four days, nothing but constant machinegun fire. This was on the western edge of town. In effect, the Dominican military with our support went in and wiped out these rebels.

Q: Were we doing anything to reconcile?

LANDBERG: Ellsworth Bunker came down with Harry Shlaudeman as his assistant. President Johnson sent him to negotiate a settlement and he did, but it was backed up with U.S. military force and basically a cease-fire went into effect. This was after this huge amount of shooting in the barrios in the north and a lot of innocent people must have been killed. God only knows how many. But he came down and they held negotiations. One day, the U.S. tanks simply moved right into the heart of downtown and took it over. The rebels got nothing. Maybe they got their lives, I suppose. But Ellsworth Bunker and Harry Shlaudeman negotiated the whole thing. There were no supplies into the rebels. A lot of the young people who had come in to fight with them started drifting out and going home back to places like San Francisco de Marcoris. So, that ended that. This was a multilateral force, by the way. There was a Paraguayan military unit that came out. They were very musical. They were a lot of fun. So, it was an international force.

When that was over, then the OAS came in and set up the arrangements for an election in June of '66. Joaquin Balaguer was elected president. So, in the end, it was quite a successful outcome. A lot more people would have died if the U.S. hadn't intervened.

Q: As you were going back and forth, did you get any feeling that there was Cuban influence?

LANDBERG: I would have no way of knowing? I think it was generally felt there were, that the Cubans were going to try to exploit this and they sent people in to help the rebels. But there was no large numbers of Cuban volunteers or anything like that. I think people felt that? I was a junior officer. I was at the very bottom of the totem pole. The only reason that I got involved with some things is that things had to be done. As a junior officer, I just happened to be standing in places sometimes and people would say, "We need to do this. Go do this" and I would go do it. If you brought all my colleagues in, they would all give you their perspective, but it would be very similar.

Q: Were you getting any feel for how popular this revolt was? Was this a class thing or a town versus country thing?

LANDBERG: The people hated these military, who were mostly the remnants of the same people who had been under Trujillo and they had been terribly brutal. Of course, the leaders, the worst, in the Trujillo family, fled the country. It's a long, very involved story. The U.S. basically negotiated the departure of the Trujillo family and then helped before I arrived to arrange elections, in which Juan Bosch was elected. Juan Bosch was quite popular, but he had a very difficult economic situation on his hands. The country was very poor. People in the countryside were subsistence farmers. They worked in sugar fields and it was extremely hard labor. So, people hated this government that had been through trauma. Initially, especially since the government had not been paying salaries and the countryside was in an economic disaster state, a lot of young people came and joined the rebels. The U.S. military had got incredible fire power. A lot of them got killed and that dimmed their enthusiasm. I thought the way the U.S. handled it was pretty intelligent, essentially separating the two sides, keeping the rebel forces bottled up, and make it clear that we had control and a lot of young people started filtering out. By taking all this food? We distributed an immense amount of food. The rain there? I drove a truck full of food through a flood. I can remember driving through two feet of water in a truck with food. I don't remember exactly how I got in that position. We took all this food out and we got local women's clubs - there were women's clubs in the Din these little towns to help organize the distribution of food. So, we flooded the place with food. We paid all this back payroll to get some money going. We pacified the interior. Nothing ever really happened seriously in any of these smaller towns in the country. As things improved and as the rebels realized that it was a lost cause, young people started filtering out. In the end, they didn't resist when the U.S. finally took tanks and moved them right down into the center of town and basically occupied the rebel zone. That was the end of it. That was done peacefully. There was no opposition.

You asked about the attitude. Initially, it was popular because people hated the military, but the U.S. in effect stopped everything in its tracks and restored a normal society. One of the things I did do was, I bought garbage trucks. The city incinerator was right alongside the only bridge out of town. This broke out on a Saturday, so all the garbage trucks were parked by the incinerator. This is where a huge battle broke out with tanks and stuff between the rebels and the air force, which had tanks. Plus, the air force was flying down and bombing, so the city side of this bridge was held by the rebel group and there was a huge battle, which the rebels won. In the process, all the garbage trucks got shot to pieces. They were using them for barriers. So, we had this town of 250,000 or more people and no garbage trucks. Initially, I hired private trucks to pick up garbage. I arranged for the OAS to fund about 20-30 brand new garbage trucks. They started arriving just before I left the country.

Q: You left when?

LANDBERG: I extended a few months because my wife was teaching and wanted to finish the school year. So, I extended to June. My tour was up in April, but I extended to June 1966. I left just after the election, just after Balaguer was elected.

Q: You talk about the Dominican Republic being so poor. As an economic officer, were you looking over at Haiti and seeing Haiti as even worse?

LANDBERG: Oh, yes, Haiti was even worse. My next assignment was to India. India was incredibly poor. People were living in barely human levels in the poor parts of Old Delhi. The slums of downtown Port-au-Prince were unbelievable.

Q: Was there any hope for the Dominican Republic economically?

LANDBERG: I think so. They have done reasonably well, I guess. The economy was pretty much based on sugar and other agriculture. But I wouldn't say it was totally hopeless. This was 35 years ago. They have gotten along? We went back when my son was assigned there and went out into the country. We took a trip all throughout the country. I think we went to San Francisco de Marcoris. It's changed amazingly little in the countryside. Santo Domingo is huge. All the activity is in Santo Domingo, which is 10 times the size it was, with big high-rise buildings. There is a textile industry and stuff like that. That is done reasonably well under the Caribbean Basin Initiative. But when you go into the countryside, life certainly didn't seem changed in a lot of places. My wife had a friend whose parents retired in a town nearby there and they insisted we go visit. We did. That little town is doing well. The tourism has done well. They're doing well on tourism. They have great potential there. I think that they pretty much realized a lot of that potential. These huge resorts that didn't exist when we were there? You couldn't even get to some parts of Mariposa. Now it's lined with these gigantic resorts and Europeans fly in on charters to the north coast to these big resorts. That was part of the potential that they have realized. A lot of it's because of foreign investment. They have places where there are Italian resorts and the Italians fly in there. There are places where the English and the Germans come. They've done well with that. I think that potential is always there. They seem to be doing pretty well. But when you go out into the interior, you find that people are still living subsistence.

Q: In '66, you were assigned to India?

LANDBERG: I was originally assigned to the Azores. It was an unfurnished post. Even a stove you didn't get. So, we went to a Sears Roebuck and bought a stove, a little refrigerator, a washer, and everything. We went home and this friend of mine called me from Santo Domingo and said, "Guess what? They changed your assignment to India." I had to call Sears and cancel all that. So, I went to India as a consular officer.

Q: You were there from '66 to when?

LANDBERG: I left in December of '67. There was just a two person consulate with a junior officer on location. So, I was the second guy. I worked for this really terrific fellow, George Hughie. He had an illness in his family and had to leave. They advised him to go back to the States. So, they went back. So, I became the head of the consular section interim for about six to eight months.

Q: You were in India from when to when?

LANDBERG: I left the Dominican Republic in June. I got to India in August of '66.

Q: When did you leave India?

LANDBERG: I was interim consul, head of section, for six to eight months. Then they assigned a guy to be the consul. I said that I wasn't going to go back to being number two there. Just at that time, they asked for volunteers for Vietnam. So, I volunteered for Vietnam.

Q: So it was '67.

LANDBERG: I left the first few days of December of '67.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you were there?

LANDBERG: Chester Bowles, a wonderful guy. I got to know him a little bit more because I became the interim head of section. India at the time was nothing like it is now. We didn't have this huge? There was not a huge amount of visa business. There was a fair amount of citizen protection because Americans would go on these trips around India and die or get thrown in jail.

Q: It was also the height of the Wanderjahr and the flower children.

LANDBERG: Yes. I have a wonderful flower children story. I was sitting in my office. They told me this young woman was there. She came walking in and sat down and handed me this petition. The petition talked about ashram and world peace. There were three or four pages and it was addressed to Ambassador Bowles. I looked at it and said, "Well, what do you want?" She said, "We just wanted you to know about it." I said, "Well, I'll tell Ambassador Bowles" and she said, "Oh, aren't you Ambassador Bowles?" So, this nice young woman goes away. I must have been the head of section for quite a while. Months and months later, we had this? The Indian employees are wonderful, so efficient. My head Indian employee comes in and said in the newspaper that this young American had been arrested in Benaris, the religious center of Hinduism. Of course, the Indians are xenophobic. They think all foreigners are spies and everything. We had a consular agreement. They were supposed to notify us and they hadn't. So, the first we knew about it is, we called the Indians and gave them holy hell for not telling us and they said, "Well, we're going to bring her back to New Delhi. She's under arrest." What had happened was, she had decided to send what effectively is hashish to a friend in Boston and wrapped it in a package and put a return address of the ashram on the package. It's called Charles. It's more like marijuana. It's a cannabis plant. Of course, they had dogs in the post office and they smelled this. So, they went to her ashram. She had wandered off into the hills and was in a cave or something. They came two or three times looking for her. When she came back, the people in the ashram said, "Well, the police were here looking for you." So, she wanders down to the police station in Benaris and says, "Hello, are you looking for me?" They promptly arrested her and plopped her in jail and treated her like an enemy of the people. Somebody put it in the newspaper or we wouldn't even have known about it. So, we gave them holy hell and they said, "We're going to bring her up to New Delhi." We said, "That's fine." So, I was home that night and got a telephone call from the prison. The guys said, "Mr. Landberg, I'm So and So, the head of the prison." It was the downtown prison. He said, "I have Miss So and So here and we really have no facilities for women here." So, breaking all the rules, I went and picked her up and brought her home. Well, she was about six months pregnant and just smelled awful. She had nothing. She might have had a little bunch of rags that she carried with her. I brought her home and fed her something. At first, she wanted to take a shower, so she went in and took a shower. Then I thought, "Oh, my god, what if she decides to commit suicide in my bathroom?" My wife says I was pacing up and down outside the bathroom trying to hear if she was slitting her wrists or something. I fed her. Then the next day, we took her down? I guess I sent a cable. One of the things, by the way, that I found out in my short consular career was how efficient they were in Washington in dealing with these things. I must have sent a telegram. This young woman was a college graduate and her family was in North Carolina. They sent money. I took her down to the judge and they fined her $25.00 and let her go on the proviso she get right on the plane and go back to the U.S. So, through the consular people, I had gotten a ticket for her and a little bit of money and we paid her fine. I took her to the airport and put her on a plane and sent her home. She was a starry eyed flower person if there ever was one, gentle, sweet, not an enemy of the people.

Q: You did consular work the whole time you were there?

LANDBERG: Yes.

Q: There really wasn't much immigration, was there?

LANDBERG: No, there wasn't. The only immigrants that stand out in my mind? We had this incredibly efficient staff, so all you really had to do was sign your name and do the formal interview. They did all the prescreening to make sure everything was right up to snuff. But the ones that stand out in my mind were the guys who had gone to MIT and gotten their Ph.D. in physics and then came back and had an arranged marriage and brought their wife in. By this time, after 10 years at MIT, they had become legal immigrants. Then they would come back and have an arranged marriage, usually a woman who didn't speak any English. They would bring them in and get their immigrant visa and take her back to the States. Those are the ones that stand out.

Many of the non-immigrant kids that I remember? MIT had a program with the Indian Institute of Technology in Kampur. They had raised it to the same academic level as undergraduate level at MIT. They were working on making it graduate level. So, you could take a student at either school and put them in the other school and basically get the same academic program. They were bringing in the cream of the cream of Indians from Kampur and taking them to MIT. We'd give them a student visa. Some of them just radiated intelligence, were really smart kids. Probably a lot of them never returned to India.

Q: Certainly the Indians have come to be a major factor in the technology field.

How did you find the embassy as an organism and social life? I guess it was quite different from Santo Domingo.

LANDBERG: Yes. Well, in Santo Domingo, we had all those junior officers and we all hung together. India didn't have that. Bowles was a major figure and he liked to have high powered people around him, so he had a counselor for political? He had a joint political-economic section with one guy at the top. Then he had a counselor for the economic side and a counselor for the political side. Under them, he had a counselor for internal affairs and a counselor for external affairs. He had this huge hierarchy of senior Foreign Service people. It was a huge embassy. This was not too long after the Sino-Indo war of 1964 or something. So, we had a huge military mission. We had 1,000 Peace Corps volunteers in the country. We had a huge USIS program. It was a big embassy and Bowles presided over it. He was not a detail person. He was probably the only person in the history of India that could actually give advice to the Indians and have them accept it and say, "Ambassador Bowles said India should do this or that, so that must be right." If any other foreigner dared to make the slightest comment about India, they'd be reviled. But Bowles had this incredible reputation because of his first tour in which they felt he had saved India from starvation. So, he had this great reputation. He refused to live in the new embassy building. He lived in his old residence.

Ambassador Bowles would invite people from the embassy to lunch every day of the week, he and his wife. He invited everybodsecretaries, communicators, assistant GSOs. Everybody at that embassy went to lunch at least? I went twice, and maybe three times, during the time I was there. They had this nice patio and there would be eight to ten people and you would have lunch with the ambassador and his wife. It was an incredible thing that not many people would do. The result was a nice feeling in the embassy. It was a big embassy. You could be in Personnel, this two person section, and you had to go out and find your own social relationships.

Our first son was born there, the one who is in the Foreign Service.

Q: How did you in consular affairs find dealing with Indian officials? I understand they can be very difficult.

LANDBERG: Yes, but they weren't that difficult. They're suspicious of foreigners. I don't remember anybody ever giving me a hard time. They didn't bend over backwards to be helpful of their own volition, but if you asked for help or information, they gave it to you. We had terrific Indian local employees. When we had, as often was the case, some American would die in India and we had to ship them home, they were smooth. They should have told us about this young woman who was arrested in Benaris and they didn't do that. But when we called them on it, right away, they said, "Oh, we'll bring her up to New Delhi." I took her to the judge and the judge said, "$25.00 fine and leave the country." Even the kids in the jail? There was no air conditioning and it was hot as blazes in Delhi in the summertime. This guy used to take [inaudible] and stuff like that. They put him to work in the library. He had to serve out his time. He came out and came to the embassy, to my office, and he had a little blond with him. I don't know where he had found this blond. He said he wondered if he could borrow money to take the train to Pakistan. I said, "How much would that be?" It was like a few dollars. I gave him the money and never saw him again. That was part of his thing. He had to get out of India. So, he and this little blond went and got on a train and left India. The Indians, while they could be suspicious, they were not hostile. I never found them to be extremely difficult.

Q: You were there quite a short time. Did you develop any Indian friends?

LANDBERG: Oh, yes, some. There was an American there married to an Indian doctor. He had done his work in the U.S. We became friends with them. There were some others. Then the consulate had these couple of doctors who did the physicals and stuff like that. We befriended them. Our local employees? There were some, but it was difficult because most of them lived at the level of? The standard of living was, especially in housing, much lower than it would be for even a low level officer in the embassy. They were kind of reluctant to have you come to their houses. It was the kind of place where you would be in the living room and the kitchen would be on the perimeter. These were middle class people. But notwithstanding that, we developed local friends.

Q: You found you were going to get another boss and didn't really want to do that.

LANDBERG: Yes. I assumed that if I volunteered for Vietnam, they would let me finish my tour. We really liked India a lot. It is an incredible country. But instead, I just got right back something that said, "Pack up and leave and come to Washington for training."

Q: This would be a good place to stop.

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Today is June 13, 2001. It was 1968 you went out to Vietnam. Talk about the training that you got before you went.

LANDBERG: They called it the Vietnam Training Center. It was sort of regional training, but we did one exercise that was supposed to be kind of an exercise in understanding the convoluted politics and guerrilla tactics of Vietnam. It was with CIA and the CIA guys subverted it by getting together and, in effect, taking it over. That is to say, they were on different teams but they got together themselves and figured out how to take control, which I suppose was a lesson for Vietnam. But otherwise, it was kind of run of the mill regional training about what was happening in Vietnam. This was before Tet. I was scheduled to go out in March. Tet occurred as I was about to go out. I decided I didn't want to take Vietnamese language training and spend another year. I could have taken the training, but I decided not to do it. As I was about to leave, Tet occurred, so they stopped new people coming in for the moment, so I took Vietnamese training for six weeks or so and then left in April.

Q: What were you getting from your colleagues who were going out there before you went out about our involvement in Vietnam?

LANDBERG: They were all very positive. The people doing the training were people who had spent a lot of time in Vietnam. It was also very pragmatic. I don't recall that people talked a lot about the pros and cons of our being in Vietnam, that is to say the wisdom or the morality, a lot. I don't recall a lot of hand wringing about whether we should be there. It was really more of a practical approach. "We're going to Vietnam. We're in Vietnam." I was assigned to CORDS. "CORDS has a mission and this is it. This is what you can expect." You were assigned a post when you got to Vietnam.

Q: So you arrived there when?

LANDBERG: I remember it being April '68. So, the Tet attack was over and they had reopened things. I got to Saigon. I wasn't in Saigon very long, a few days. Then I went up to the headquarters for II CORPS, Nha Trang. Some of Nha Trang had gotten shot up. They put me in a house for a week and the house was all full of bullets. We had [inaudible] in this house. They all tried to get into a closet to escape all the bullets coming in and they were all killed. They were all killed in this closet, about 10 Viet Cong in this closet who were killed.

So, I stayed in there for a week and they sent me to Binh Dinh province. They assigned me as deputy senior advisor in a district called Vinh Dinh, which was north of Quinyan province capital. By then, it must have been May. I went up there to be deputy.

Q: Was this close to the coast?

LANDBERG: Yes, it's on the coast.

Q: What was the situation in your province when you arrived?

LANDBERG: It was right after Tet. There was an entire North Vietnamese army division in the district, the 3rd NVA Division. There were some huge battles that occurred there. After I arrived, there was an American combat infantry battalion that was assigned there. They had some big battles with the NVA division. The NVA division would march up and down the district. The reason for their being? The VC were very active, too, so it was heavily fought over. The reason for that is that there is a valley that goes up into the mountains and heads into Cambodia from this distance. This is the first place you come to at the opening of the valley where there is rice and food. It comes right down this valley, which was called the 504 Valley, in a straight line right down into northern Vinh Dinh province into the lowlands, where there is a lot of food. So, it was one of the routes for the NVA to come into central Vietnam. So, this NVA division was there. This U.S. combat division? They had some huge battles. I think they had a battle there in which in the neighborhood of 1,000 U.S. soldiers were killed. The division stayed there almost all of that year. I was sent to be deputy district senior advisor. We were headquartered with the district chief, who was a military man, in his district headquarters. The guy I worked for was regular Army. He had been in the Army all his life, but he had just gotten married and had a new child. He spent all of his time talking about the merits of the various PXs in Germany and stuff like that. He did not like being there. So, he got himself transferred. I was out with the district chief. There was a lieutenant colonel who was a deputy province advisor. Ben Ward was a Foreign Service officer, the guy I worked for. He was the province senior advisor. The province headquarters was in Quinyan. So, this lieutenant colonel came up and we went out into the field and we got attacked somewhere. I don't recall doing anything very much but I guess this colonel thought I didn't totally panic, so he recommended they make me the district senior advisor. So, after about six weeks, I became a senior advisor.

It was a fairly large team. It was CORDS, so we had the military? They were all military on my team. I had a civil affairs team that was there to help build roads and things like that. They had just started the practice of forming mobile teams that would go out and live with Vietnamese units in the field. Over time, we built up about five of those. They were four or five man teams. So, the whole team got to be quite large. For the remainder of '68, the battle really was with the North Vietnamese Army. There was an RVN regiment in the district and they were headquartered about a mile south of the district headquarters. You wouldn't do that, but if you went out into the rice fields and looked south, you could see their headquarters. So, the big battles were really combat battles. It was quite a dangerous place. Every night, we had tanks come in and protect our compound. Our district compound was the district headquarters and was at the edge of the capital city, a little town of Phu My. We had a gigantic barbed wire fence and minefields all around for hundreds of yards.

Q: Did the North Vietnamese division try to take this?

LANDBERG: Yes, they did, several times. They tried it. I don't remember dates now, but they attempted to get in and did actually before I got there attack it and got into the compound. Several people were killed, including a couple of Americans on a team. That was before I came. After I came, there was an attack? There happened to be an RVN company of armored personnel carriers that just happened to be passing through. I stopped for the night at the RVN regimental headquarters. They saved us. They headed out across the rice fields just as dawn was coming up and hit this NVA group. There was sort of a slaughter. They turned and headed for the mountains to the west. My team called in air strikes. They killed a lot of NVA and a lot of civilians. They ran into a little hamlet and bombed the hell out of it. I suppose that anybody in that hamlet who was in their little house was killed. There were bodies everywhere. A lot of them were NVA. There were probably a lot of civilians who were killed. They pulled back. But there was still quite a lot of NVA. So, the story of how the NVA power was broken is an interesting one.

Q: While you were there, this division was prowling through the area?

LANDBERG: Yes, but they didn't move except at night usually. But really it was the U.S? Out to the west of Highway 1 was rice fields and then the foothills of these hills. The NVA were up there. Then they would come down at night and they attacked little towns like our district headquarters and the little exposed hamlets and things like that. But most of the fighting occurred when the U.S. combat battalion, who had a colonel who was a commander who was quite an aggressive guy, went out in the daytime and probed around and they found the NVA and had some big battles. We'd get all these reports and they'd be here or there. The ARVN regiment seldom ever engaged them. It was like they passed each other in the dark, so to speak. I had a new deputy who was a military guy, a very nice fellow, a really good guy, very capable, a major. At the same time as the NVA were there, we were trying to pursue what was called "pacification," which was really to protect the relatively government-controlled villages which were not necessarily controlled at night, and then also to expand the area of government control in the midst of this broader war that was going on. Especially at that time when they got caught out in broad daylight, the NVA got hurt pretty badly, so their forces were greatly reduced. So there was a period of time in the fall or maybe later into the year when the NVA activity reduced considerably and we started to pursue the pacification program, which was basically to expand the area of government control. That's what I concentrated on, a strategy for doing that. In the process, what we did was, we'd mount a military operation and go in and take over areas that were considered to be VC-controlled areas. The basic idea was to go in, reestablish some kind of government control, rebuild a school, bring in some schoolteachers. If there were refugees who had left that village, if there was adequate security, then try to get some of the refugees to come back. There were tens of thousands of refugees in refugee camps in the Quinyan area. The idea was to get some of them to come back and rebuild their houses. We gave them help. The civil affairs team helped scrounge cement and stuff for rebuilding - there were a lot of small streams in this districsmall bridges and culverts and stuff like that so you could get in and out of these places.

But there were several serious flaws in the way that pacification was conducted. We became more and more concerned because we were having a hard time. This was a very tough, dangerous area. A lot of VC from this district had gone north after partition, so people who knew that district really well had gone north for training. So, they were very experienced, very tough. We felt that there were three real big problems for the way the pacification program was conducted. One was that there was no central command structure. We had a district chief and the district chief was in charge of something like a militia of various levels. Regional forces were the best armed. Then there were popular forces. Then they had even a lower level than that. The idea was that these people would protect and live in populated areas. Then there was an ARVN regiment. A regimental commander was in charge of that. Then there was a U.S. infantry battalion. There was a fairly big U.S. base, a helicopter base. They had artillery there, too. So, when some of these battles occurred, there was U.S. artillery that was brought to bear. All three did their own thing. The district chief really didn't have control. He was responsible for pacification, but he didn't have control of half the troops in the district. So, that was one big flaw.

The second big flaw was a seriously flawed strategy. The pacification strategy which was formulated and sent down to us was called Concentric Ring Theory. You would have these regional and popular forces in the populated areas and then you would have ARVN, regular military, who would be in the outer areas, the surrounding populated areas, and they would protect you, the populated areas, against the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong intruders. There were three or four serious flaws in that. One was that usually if the enemy came down to attack an area, they would come down at night. Often, they'd come down river valleys and stuff. So, if you were out there on the periphery and the enemy came by and you engaged them, you could get killed. So, very often, the ARVN didn't happen to encounter the enemy coming in. Or if they did encounter them, they did nothing. They weren't really responsible. If they passed them and went by and went further into the populated areas and attacked some area, it wasn't ARVN that got killed; it was some other guy's troops. So, the Concentric Ring didn't work.

The second problem was that during the process of ARVN being on the periphery, they would do these sweeps, what we called a "walk in the sun." The enemy wasn't going to come out in the daytime. So, they would patrol around. If they happened to go through our village, the people in this village meant nothing to them, so they'd steal their chickens or rape their wives or whatever. So, the people hated the ARVN troops. The ARVN troops had no sense of identity with the people in these villages. They didn't know them. They were total strangers. It's pretty easy to treat people that way if you have no kind of identification with them.

There was a third major flaw, but I can't remember now what it was.

So, we were very fortunate that just about the time when we were coming to this conclusion, the ARVN regiment got a new commander. I don't think we could have done what we did if it hadn't been for that. He was a very bright guy. We proposed to change the command structure in the district. What we did is, we divided the district into two parts and we made the ARVN regimental commander in charge of everything in the southern part of the district and the district chief in charge of all troops in the northern part of the district whether they were militia or ARVN or whatever. So, you would have unified command and responsibility. Then the second thing we did is, we proposed that the ARVN troops instead of being on the outer periphery become integrated into something like a militia force and that they actually live and units remain for as long as possible (it turned out to be 30 days to two months) in a village area and be responsible for the security of that area. All of this was very controversial. I think about that time, this FSO, who was a terrific guy, left and an Army colonel came and became the province senior advisor. He was a terrific guy also. So, he supported us. They had to go all the way to Saigon. This involved an ARVN decision as well. They went to Saigon and they approved our plan. So, we adopted this plan. It had terrific effect. If you had an ARVN company in a village area and you put one platoon out on the periphery and they let the enemy in, there were going to be ARVN guys that might get attacked and killed in a populated area. The captain in charge of that company would want to know the reason why. It changed that aspect of it. It made the commander in the southern part of the district responsible. Therefore, if it was a success, he would get credit for the success as well. The second thing that happened is that, by putting ARVN troops into relatively static positions in populated areas, they came to know the people in their village. It's one thing to steal a chicken when you're walking through. It's another thing to see? These were poor people. A lot of these kids were malnourished. If you see the kids and stuff and then steal a chicken and are there the next day when people can (1) identify you and (2) see the kids looking at you, it was a different thing. The result was a difference in attitude between ARVN and the people in these populated areas. It was quite successful. The third thing we did was to begin to integrate the U.S. infantry battalion into the whole plan. It all took cooperation. We had to convince the ARVN commander. We had to convince the U.S. infantry battalion and his commanders. The U.S. infantry groups were extremely well armed. They had unbelievable fire power and mobility and helicopters and all that kind of stuff. So, we used them as kind of the advance shock troops. We'd go into VC-controlled areas with the U.S. to establish control and we'd bring in the rest of the troops after we had control. We also were fortunate to have a U.S. infantry company that understood how to fight guerrilla style. I can't say enough negatively about the way our army fought that war. The area I was in, which was hilly, if you got up on a hill, you could see across the rice fields for miles. Because of morale, they would fly? If the U.S. infantry battalion had a unit somewhere out here in the field, they would fly in with helicopters and bring in food and beer and stuff like that. So, you could see where they were from 20 miles away. There was a guy there? I don't know why he was so interested in doing this. He was a company commander. He said, "We're not going to do that." They disappeared into the brush. They didn't do any of that. They would lay low for a couple of days and the VC would pop up in the night. They saw no activity and would come out and they started killing VC like crazy. So, it was just happenstance that that happened. It's the only company I ever encountered in my whole time in the district that used a really counter guerrilla approach instead of the standard Army approach. The result was that we began to spread the area of government control in both the north and south parts of the areas that you could not go into, that were really totally VC-controlled with no government presence. We slowly pushed them back. I've always felt that the reasoning for the final demise of the NVA Third Division was that some of the NVA were in an area where rice was growing and they came out to cut rice, to gather food, and there was an ARVN unit, an ARVN platoon, nearby that was under the control of the district team. They reported what was happening and he said, "Well, attack them." They did. That was breaking the rules. The ARVN didn't attack. It was a "live and let live" type of thing. So, when the ARVN did that, it kind of broke the rules. I have no other explanation. I don't know if anybody has ever explained why in broad daylight the NVA came out of the mountains and attacked our headquarters. Of course, they never made it. They came down out of the mountains and came across the fields towards the district headquarters. They just got crucified by airpower. That pretty much decimated them and they retreated. They ran back into this area where there was a ridge. There were Korean troops? At this time, they were not in our district, but they were right on the fringe. They had tanks. So, the Koreans just drove up this valley and isolated the NVA, the remnants of the division, on this hill and they bombed it night and day. The whole hill was on fire. They pretty much destroyed what was left of the Third Division. Whoever got away, they pulled all the way back into Cambodia and they never came back into the district. It was about the beginning of 1969. That meant that we were free to pursue the Pacification Program with full vigor.

It was still a very tough area. There were a lot of VC because it was so strategic. Further south, the whole area was becoming more and more secure, so this was the furthest south area where the VC had big influence. North of my district, there was still heavy VC control. So, we pursued the Pacification Program. It was doing very well. We drove the VC out of these villages and drove them up into the mountains, where they began to starve to death. I don't remember the timing of all of this. We had a program called Chu Hoi. It was to give people something like an amnesty if they came in and gave themselves up.

Q: I was with Chu Hoi.

LANDBERG: The people that came were the Hoi Chan. We had the largest single group of VC give themselves up in Vietnam that year. It was negotiated. I had control of the money. The district chief's deputy, a military guy, negotiated this thing. I gave him the money. They paid all kinds of people off to come in. They had about 1,000 VC come in. They had a big ceremony. The people from Saigon came. They had a big ceremony. It was a large group of people. They took them away. I think they only came in because they didn't have any good alternative and they couldn't go back into their villages. So, by mid-late 1969, we had pretty much taken over the entire populated area of the district. It was fairly heavily populated. There were some villages that were virtually deserted. We felt fairly confident. The NVA was gone. We felt fairly confident about security. So, we started resettling. People started coming back. It wasn't so much that we resettled them, but when the word got out that these villages seemed to be relatively secure, people started coming back from these refugee camps and resettling.

How did we do all of this? I had money. We scrounged immense amounts of cement and tin for roofs and all kinds of building materials from the military. We traded captured weapons and stuff. There was a big Air Force base to the south of us and they had tons and tons of stuff. Guys on my team scrounged immense amounts of stuff and they used it to help people rebuild houses and everything.

Q: Did you deal with the Vietnamese officials in the area?

LANDBERG: My counterpart was military. The district chief was military.

Q: How did that work?

LANDBERG: Fine. The first one was a real bright guy, very aggressive. He saw the mirror? It was in the discussions with him when we discussed the fact that we didn't have unitary control. We worked out this program together. He worked on the government side and I worked on the U.S. side to get Saigon approval for this change of plans. So, he got promoted, unfortunately for me. He got promoted to lieutenant colonel and they sent him to command some unit somewhere and he left. They sent another guy in who was fairly corrupt, but he was alright. I felt that he wasn't doing very well. I might have helped to get rid of him and then they brought in another guy that was quite good. That was not too long before the end of my tour. By the time I left, it was?

I should say one other thing. Because the southern part of Binh Dinh south of where I was had been? In all of Vietnam, the pacification program was doing very well. This was sort of like the height? It was about that time that Nixon said we would start pulling troops out. But my area was still considered one of the most dangerous, most difficult areas on the coast. So, they sent two more U.S. infantry battalions. We had to clear out this area and make sure that nobody came down into Cambodia through my district. So, we had three U.S. infantry battalions. You had the ARVN regiment. They formed their regional forces, which were militia, into battalions also. We had the equivalent of about five or six battalions, regional popular forces. We were able to gain control. We had immense numbers of troops. I think it was around the spring of 1969 when as part of this plan to have unitary control, the commander of the one infantry battalion moved his headquarters into my headquarters. We built a tactical operations center with scrounge materials. We had a Vietnamese side. So, the battalion, a lieutenant colonel, commander actually lived in my compound. Our compound wasn't so big, so we had him there. So, we had all these communications abilities that U.S. combat units had, which were awesome. Then we had the Vietnamese there. We had a liaison with the ARVN. So, we really had an integrated operation and it worked fairly well.

We had a couple of things that went wrong. This wonderful ARVN commander, who was just terrific, was in a theater and a terrorist bomb went off and he was badly wounded. So, they replaced him with a more run of the mill-type person and I could see almost immediately the effectiveness of ARVN go downhill. That's sort of the basic story of my 21 months.

Q: What sort of military experience had you had prior to this?

LANDBERG: None. That's why we were successful. We broke every rule. But it was essentially a matter of developing unified command and then the right kind of approach and then applying it. It's not that we didn't have setbacks. It was fairly hard work and it was quite dangerous. Several people on my team were killed. We had at least 10 or 15 people wounded. I was very close to being wounded. A mortar round landed very near to me in the night. I lived in a district building but in a bunkerized area and I slept under sandbags. I had a big platform built over my bed. Underneath, we had a concrete bunker. Part of my team lived there and I had a hole right next to my bed. If we got attacked, I could go down through this hole. We did get attacked. I was down in the little bunker. Our tactical operations center was across a field that was 50 yards across. It's something I'll never forget. Nothing happened for quite a while, so I decided I'd go out there. I started running across. I had only underpants on. I was carrying an M-16. Then a mortar round came in and landed right nearby and I started falling, but I didn't know. It was pitch dark. I couldn't see a thing. It was absolutely pitch dark. I had no orientation. I simply ran right into the ground, but without knowing it. When I hit the ground, I was totally surprised because I thought I had been upright. In effect, I was running. It was gravel? So, I landed in the gravel with my nose. We had a lieutenant on our team and he saw what happened. He went out and picked me up and brought me back to the tactical operations center. As far as I know, I was not really harmed by the mortar round, but I was all bloodied all down the front.

To go back to your question, I had not ever served in the military. I had a really good deputy. This major who was my deputy was very good. He was a brave guy and the guys on my team revered him. He did the tactical day to day military operations. I did the strategy and the basic politics with everybody. The overall thing? I ran the district with my Vietnamese counterparts.

Q: What was your impression of the Vietnamese village chiefs?

LANDBERG: Great variety. There were some who were terrific who had the popular consensus. We did have several elections while I was there, including a national election for president. We spent a lot of time on that. This had to be something the Vietnamese did. The district chief certainly understood the importance of having strong village and hamlet leaders. So, by and large, it seems to me they were pretty good. It was pretty dangerous in these villages at night. The VC, if they got into these villages, that's it for the leaders. They didn't just kill them; they killed their wives and children. So, it was pretty dangerous to be out there. We had a lot of village leaders that were killed in this period. There were guys who couldn't stand it who would leave and that kind of thing. It was dangerous work. A village is a government entity, like a county but smaller. A village is actually a bunch of hamlets. Where the people live is actually in a hamlet. A village could be made up of four to six hamlets. The population lived there and then the village chief was the guy who was responsible for the entire area. Just as important were the individual leaders in these hamlets. That's where the people actually lived and where they had to be defended. So, every one of these little hamlets had to have a little militia, a popular force group, there. They had to work with the hamlet chiefs. A lot of these guys were military, in fact. It was dangerous work.

Q: How heavily did the hands of CORDS headquarters in Nha Trang and IICORPS and then in Saigon rest upon you?

LANDBERG: We had to report once a month on the status of our program. I kept the last overlay that showed where we were. We had immense numbers of official visitors, including the heads of CORDS. Who was the first guy? Afterwards, he was over at the Defense Department.

Q: It's not ringing a bell now.

LANDBERG: Then Colby, the CIA guy, came. He later became head of the CIA. The first guy they called "Blowtorch Bob." He was Bob Komer. He came with all these reporters and spent a night there in my district. All he did was talk with his reporters and banter. He didn't really know where he was. He just knew that he knew everything anyway. But Colby came and was much more serious about things. He did not want a security escort. He had this idea that he would be low key and therefore he just came in a car with a couple of people. Then he was going to go north. He said, "No military escort. No security or anything." Well, you know, we said, "That's bullshit." You're going into really Indian territory. They were a little upset that we said, "You're going to have security" and we sent security with them. They were going to a really dangerous area.

Then we had tons of other people that would come in. It was an interesting district. There was a lot of activity there historically. Strategically it was important. It was one of the last areas where there was still a lot of VC activity. Throughout the rest of the country, by mid-1969, the program had worked pretty well throughout the rest of Vietnam. It was mostly the northern part of South Vietnam that? So, we had all these people who would come in all the time. I spent a lot of time with visitors. Reporters would come. Joseph Alsop would come every three months and talk about how pacification was working. I had a lot of people come, but nobody? We certainly got more and more troops assigned. We got M16s for our regional forces. I made a lot of requests for stuff and, by and large, because I worked for this terrific colonel who was very effective, we got a lot of resources. The one thing that we had trouble with was getting a well so we could have fresh water.

Q: That's what we kind of did; we went around and dug wells, didn't we?

LANDBERG: Well, that's what they were supposed to do, but? The guys on my team had to go to? I think they took these big rubber things out and filled them with water in some stream. But we did not have a potable well. We had a well in the district headquarters, but it wasn't potable. It wasn't the same. So, one day, somebody came into my office and said, "Colonel, there are some people coming from headquarters." They all trooped in. They were all colonels and they said, "Well, we're here to see about building your well." I said, "Oh, that's great. It just takes so damn much time for my team to go get water." They said, "We're going to build you a well." We talked about it. I said, "Great." They went away and nothing happened for months and months. Three, four, or five months later, somebody says... We had a helicopter pad right out in back, so people came and went by helicopter. We had a bunch of colonels come in and say, "We're here to see about the well." I said, "Well, just three or four months ago, some people were here and they were going to build a well." They didn't know anything about that, but they were going to make sure we got a well. They went away and nothing happened again for three or four months. A third time they came. When they'd come in to land, they'd radio ahead and say, "Here comes?" So, my radio guy came in and said, "But all these colonels are coming about the well." They came. Nothing happened. It went on until mid-1969. The fourth time they came in and said these well guys were coming, I got in my Jeep and left. After that, somebody actually came and built a well, so it might have been me that was preventing the well from being built, I don't know. The team was pretty much on its own.

Our biggest security problem was having perimeter lights and a radio at night so we could call for help and see out across our minefields. CORDS issued two little generators to each team. They were really bad generators and would break down, so my team had to spend immense amounts of time on repairing the generators. I had a guy on the team? There was a big First Cavalry Division base to the west and southwest of us. He said that his brother worked there and his brother said they had one of these very good generators that wasn't being used and that if it was done properly, we could "borrow" this generators. So, my team went and got a flatbed truck from the Air Force and drove over to this base. His brother told them where it was. It was all hooked up. It had all these wires into it. He said, "Well, I asked my brother and he said it's alright; just unhook the wires and everything." So, they put this huge generator up on the truck. It was gigantic. They brought it back. That solved most of our power problems until we heard that somebody had stolen this generator out of this First Cavalry base. We didn't say anything. One of the inspectors came and found it and gave the team one day to get it back, so they went and borrowed the flatbed again and took it back to the First Cavalry base. They said there would be no questions asked if they got it back in 24 hours. But we pretty much lived off the land. In theory, the Vietnamese were supposed to support my team. But in fact, we supported them. They didn't have anything, no ammunition, no grenades. So, we also became kind of suppliers for the Vietnamese civilian militia forces. My team spent a lot of time scrounging. All of our food was obtained from the Air Force base by our top sergeant. My guys would trade all kinds of stuff to theguns, VC flags, stuff like that. We lived off the land. The amount of support we got from the Vietnamese was virtually nil.

Q: What about provincial reporting? There is always such an emphasis on this. My impression is that a lot of the American military reporting was trying to make it look good. When you first went out, you drew up how awful things were so your final report could cover how wonderful things were.

LANDBERG: Well, I think that's natural. I felt that the resources we had access to would be a lot better if things were pretty tough. So, I did the reports. If the military guy had been the senior advisor? I was doing the reports. I very carefully did those reports to reflect what I thought were the difficulties. I was well aware of the fact that if we still had very tough areas, we had a claim on more resources. I wasn't one to say that everything was just great and we were doing just fine, thank you. I didn't report it that way.

Q: In a way, it reflects the Foreign Service. When you put out a post report, you don't play a?

LANDBERG: Yes. So, I put out the report. The military would use body counts and stuff like that. But in my district there were some huge battles. I saw a lot of the bodies. I don't know how our military reported on those things, but there were big battles and a lot of people got killed. By and large, because of firepower, the NVA could not stand up to a U.S? But a lot of American soldiers got killed in that area. All I can say is that in my particular case, I didn't have an incentive to say that everything was going just great. But we were, in fact, making progress and there were huge areas? When I got there, I would say one third of the population of the district was really under government control. When I left, practically the entire population was under reasonably solid government control. I could go anywhere in the district pretty safely by the time I left and that wasn't the case when I got there.

Q: You left when?

LANDBERG: The very last days of November 1969. I went to Saigon sometime in the last week of November.

Q: Did you keep far away from Saigon most of the time?

LANDBERG: Yes, Saigon was just a place I went through? I went on three R&Rs while I was there, so Saigon was just a place I transited through. Running this massive operation with all these CORDS people was big, so the embassy was only interested in the CORDS headquarters. They were only interested in the administrative-type things. I had some friends there. But basically you would go down there and get on a plane and head for home. There wasn't any motivation to hang around.

Q: So, where did you go?

LANDBERG: My wife went and lived with her family in Illinois. She had been evacuated from the Dominican Republic. She did not want to go someplace where there were a lot of women and kids and everythinthe Philippines. So, she went and lived with her family. We had a son who was born in India. So, she went there. Usually, she met me on the West Coast. I got back from Vietnam November 30th or December 1st. My wife was nine months pregnant. I got home and we went out for dinner on a Monday night and that night, my wife said that she felt awfully bloated and everything. In the middle of the night, she said, "I think the baby's coming." Two days after I got back, my second son was born. Her parents were working. There I was, home from Vietnam for a couple of days. I was taking care of a two and a half year old kid, wondering where the diapers were and where was the snowsuit and all that kind of stuff. So, I went right from Vietnam to taking care of a two and a half year old. But I must say that certain aspects of my command in Vietnam were like running a girls' school. My team got into immense amounts of trouble. People just got? Drinking was a big problem. They would fight amongst themselves. We had to send our great scrounger? He looked just like George C. Scott. We called him the "Flimflam Man" because he was one of the world's greatest traders. But he got drunk one night and pulled a gun on one of the other guys, so we had to ship him out. I spent a lot of time on disciplinary matters and stuff like that. That was hard. The Army's got a giant problem to keep discipline. It did in Vietnam. It was hard to keep drugs out, and women? One night, the Vietnamese came and told me that these guys in my team had brought a bunch of prostitutes into our headquarters, which was strictly forbidden. I had a house trailer that was given to me, but I wasn't going to live in it. I let these teams, if they came in from the field, they could move in there. It was a fairly nice trailer. I had the girls all locked in the trailer. Another day, just at evening, a guy came running into my office headquarters and said, "They're cooking Hodge's dog." Hodge was the senior sergeant. He was the master sergeant on my team. He had a German shepherd dog. The shepherd would chase Vietnamese, especially if they came through the compound on their bicycles. So, the Vietnamese didn't like that dog much. Probably what happened is, somebody threw a little bit of hamburger out on the minefield and killed Hodge's dog. So, the guys in my team buried it and the Vietnamese, who liked a good roast dog, dug it up and put it on a spit, at which point somebody on my team found out about it and came running into me. So, I went out there. There were eight or 10 guys from my team and the dog was on a spit. There were no Vietnamese in sight. As soon as they got caught? They knew the Americans were sentimental about dogs, so they all split. So, there was my team. I said, "Well, bury him again." They said, "No, we went the Vietnamese that did this to be punished." I said, "Well, they're gone. Bury the dog." They said, "No, we're not going to do that." So, I picked up the dog myself off the spit, at which point they took the dog from me and buried him. About an hour later, the Vietnamese dug it up again and put it on the spit again, if you can believe that. The guys on my team were really mad. I went over to the district chief and said, "You know, the guys on my team really feel different about dogs and they're really, really mad. Could you just tell your people not to do that?" He said, "Yes, okay, I'll give orders." Then they took the dog and buried it. Presumably, it's still buried there somewhere on the compound. So, I dealt with a lot of mundane things like that.

But it was a once in a lifetime experience. It was very dangerous. I went in a lot of areas with mines. A guy in my team? We had a medic on our team, a very young guy, not more than 18 years old. He was the medic on the CORDS from my district team. Each of these mobile teams that lived out in the field had a medic, too. They were a five man team and each team had a medic. But they all got R&R halfway through their tour. A guy came in and said, well, the medic from one of these teams was gone on R&R. His last name was Dick. He said, "Specialist Dick asked if he could go out for the week with the guys on R&R." I said, "Sure, that's okay." We must have had somebody else there. He went out there and when they were coming back, they hit a mine and he was killed. His lieutenant on his team was driving and there were three Vietnamese in the back. Dick was sitting in the right-hand seat and it hit the rear tire. It killed a Vietnamese and Dick. The lieutenant was badly bruised, but didn't have a bone in his body broken. He was bruised so badly that they sent him home. It was a dangerous area. To know what was going on, you had to travel. Of course, I went out a lot by helicopter. So, I traveled into all these little remote areas and planned operations.

Q: Did John Paul Van ever run across?

LANDBERG: No. I think he was gone. I knew of him.

Q: I think he was killed later on.

LANDBERG: Was he killed in Vietnam?

Q: Yes, his helicopter was shot down.

LANDBERG: I knew of him. I don't recall that he was there. The first guy I ever worked for overseas was Francis Poncho Wiffy. He was the province senior advisor for one of the provinces in II CORPS.

You asked about interaction with people. So, I did go to Nha Trang occasionally. We had regional meetings in Nha Trang where everybody had to give dog and pony-type shows.

Q: What else did you do when you came back to the States?

LANDBERG: I went to FSI and took the economic course. From there, I went to the Office of Cuban Affairs. I was the economic officer there. I had responsibility for the Cuban sanctions program.

Q: Let's talk first about the economics course. Was this the six month course?

LANDBERG: Yes. Excellent course. I worked very hard. Quite a good course and good teachers. We worked our tails off. It was not an easy course. But I got a very high grade. We took the Graduate Record Exam. I got a really high grade in that. Then I went to Cuban Affairs because I had a friend who was a deputy director of that office. From there, I went to the Office of Regional Economic Affairs in ARA.

Q: You were in Cuban Affairs from when to when?

LANDBERG: I got there the summer of '70. I was there for two years, until 1972.

Q: What was the situation as you saw it in Cuba at that time and our relations with Cuba?

LANDBERG: I remember the story they told? Secretary Rogers? There were a lot of people in the State Department in the Latin American Bureau who were not awfully sympathetic with the Cuban sanctions and felt that they were counterproductive. The story is that when Nixon appointed Bill Rogers as Secretary of State, he said, "Don't let your boys over there get any funny ideas about Cuba." That in a nutshell was the attitude. Nixon wanted to really tighten the screws on Cuba. Cuban Affairs was actually the Office of Coordinator of Cuban Affairs. He was more than an office director. He was responsible for coordinating government-wide policy towards Cuba.

Q: Who was that?

LANDBERG: Bob Funseth. I was responsible for economic sanctions in a policy coordinating sense. Of course, Treasury Department had Mr. Summerfield, who had been doing Cuban sanctions for years and years and was really a hardnosed guy. We really did everything we could to keep the screws to the Cubans.

It was during that period that Castro gave his "mea culpa" speech in which he took responsibility for the economy being in such a miserable state. He gave a very interesting speech. That kind of reflects what things were like in Cuba. The economy was doing really poorly. It was really being kept afloat by the Soviets, who were buying all the Cuban sugar. But the Cubans also sold on the world market. The price of sugar really plummeted during that time. So, they were having a really hard economic time. But this was 1972. It was about the time when I was there that there were reports of a lot of Soviet security people. The Soviet security people went in and trained the Cuban security people. So, notwithstanding everything else, they had iron clad control over the country. There was not a chance of there being any kind of opposition in Cuba. It just disappeared quickly. So, we kept the screws on them. Our main problem was American companies? There was the extraterritorial aspect. If an American company in Canada got approached to sell something in Cuba, we said, "No, you can't do that" and then the Canadians got upset and would come and say, "You're not supposed to do that." We'd say, "Well, sorry" and do it anyway. We did that to American subsidiaries. We just said, "You can't trade with Cuba."

Q: If they traded with Cuba, what happened?

LANDBERG: There were Treasury sanctions. I don't think it ever happened. Nixon was very serious and took a personal interest in Cuba. I think nobody wanted to get crosswise with Nixon. So, if you told companies that it was the U.S. policy to put the screws to them and it was U.S. policy to not trade with them, they didn't do it. I think there were some cases? Treasury would pursue those. This bulldog guy at Treasury was very tough. But we didn't get very much involved in that.

Q: What was your general impression of the effectiveness of sanctions?

LANDBERG: I suppose I felt, like many others, that in the end the sanctions were counterproductive, that by setting ourselves up? The Cubans called it the "American blockade." The Cubans had a siege mentality and we were the enemy and Castro used us as a whipping boy for them. It was counterproductive. We should have eased them off. As far as I know, there has been very little easing even up to this day.

The interesting thing was that we did have a relationship with them. The Swiss were our representatives. We had the Cuban refugee airlift going on, so we had two flights a day that would fly into Havana and bring out refugees. An office of Cuban affairs was down in Miami. We also had humanitarian? I remember when African swine fever hit Cuba. I had arranged per a Cuban request through their representatives, the Czechs, for a vaccine for laboratory people. Apparently, this was fairly dangerous stuff. They had to know where it was. They had some laboratory workers and there was a vaccine you could give to a person to help protect them against that. The United States had that. I arranged for it to be sent in a frozen container down to Cuba on one of the refugee planes. So, we did some humanitarian-type things.

Probably the most interesting thing, which I had virtually nothing to do with, was the hijackings. This was at the height of the hijackings. People were hijacking planes and going out to Cuba. We had in Cuban Affairs a fellow who was our administrative officer in our office and handled consular and administrative matters. He was the guy that handled? The first year I was there, there were about 80-100 hijackings.

Q: There were quite a number. Then essentially we started killing the hijackers.

LANDBERG: No. Here's what happened. This fellow had a lot to do with this. What happened was, the hijackers would hijack a plane and eight times out of 10 they went to Cuba. The Cubans would try to give them a lunch or dinner and overnight and charge them an arm and a leg for the people on the plane. Then the Cubans would take the hijackers off and give them refuge. Then we an arrangement where they would gas up the plane and the plane would fly back with the passengers to the U.S. This fellow handled almost all of these things unless he happened to be gone, in which case somebody else would have to handle it. I handled a few, but he was really an expert in all of this. He very strongly felt that we had to beef up security to prevent these people from getting on the planes. We tried to persuade the Cubans that it was hurting them diplomatically to become a refuge for all these groups who were hijacking planes for publicity. So, we had a two pronged approach. In the second year I was there, that began to have some effect. The Cubans started arresting these guys. Instead of treating them as heroes, they started to treat them as criminals. Therefore, the idea that you could hijack a plane and have the red carpet rolled out by Castro began to change. That kind of dimmed things. The other thing is that this guy that handled it? There were interagency committees working on the problem of what to do about these hijackings, which really got out of hand. He said, "We have to beef up airport security." Everybody said, "Oh, we can't afford to do that." So, what we see today of going through metal detectors and so on, I think he had a major influence on that. He said, "There is no way that we can prevent these once these people get on the plane. We have to prevent people from getting on the plane with weapons." He had a big influence on the decisions which led to all of the security arrangements we see today. So, Cuban Affairs had a hand in that inadvertently. There is a medal for it and maybe he got one.

Q: On the economic side, what were you getting? Were you getting reports?

LANDBERG: Yes, there were lots of other people... All the other countries in the world had their embassies there. Academics would go down. We had lots of information. It was interesting? It was an indirect way of? In effect, the Office of Cuban Affairs was our embassy. I did the economic analysis about what was going on there. But I did it mainly by secondhand sources. I think we hired on contract some academics and economists as consultants. So, I felt that we had a pretty good idea. We really watched it very closely. I did something like economic reporting. The White House was very interested. We sent lots of reports that went to the White House about what was going on in Cuba politically and economically. They were related, of course.

Q: Were you watching an economy boiled down to essentials in Cuba?

LANDBERG: Yes, pretty much. They were having a real hard time with transportation. They took over a lot of plants. There was a state of the art nickel plant. I think it was American-owned. It was built just before Castro took power, so they had this nickel refining plant. I think they had a real hard time. By that time, they were beginning to have real problems with spare parts and stuff like that. Then the sugar was the backbone of their economy. The Russians were buying 75% of their sugar. The Russians were really? We used all of this in propaganda. "It's costing the Russians two million dollars a day." When I got there, the standard line was, "It's costing the Russians a million dollars a day." That's not much, but in those days it was significant. So, we were saying, "Cuba is kind of an economic burden on the Russians. In the context of the Cold War, that's a good thing." So, people were, in fact, quite interested in the economy and how it was doing and what the Russians were doing there. It was during that time also that the Russians built their non-submarine base in Cuba. It was not a submarine base, but there were submarines that were going in there for refueling and stuff like that.

Q: Was this "non-base" our terminology in order to avoid confrontation?

LANDBERG: Yes. But I think the U.S. told the Soviets the whole time that we didn't like their submarines going in there, but they went in and did refueling and resupplying. But it wasn't a base.

Q: You left there after two years, in 1972.

LANDBERG: Yes. I moved over to the Regional Office for Economic Affairs in ARA. I also had a really interesting project and that was the Darien Highway. The Darien Highway is the last unbuilt piece of the Pan-American Highway that runs from Anchorage to Tierra del Fuego. The president of Colombia persuaded Nixon that they should build that last stretch of highway and unite the hemispheres and they could be there snipping the ribbon. So, Nixon also became very interested in that. Some way in which I can't remember, that became one of my responsibilities there. I worked with a deputy assistant secretary. The problem was that this foot and mouth disease had plugged in. There is no place in the world where you have foot and mouth disease in the normal transportation where they had been able to stop its spread. So, the reason it hadn't spread into the north into Central America is because you had this big, pristine, tropical jungle. The idea of the Darien Highway was to build a road right through the jungle. In fact, they had started construction on it. The U.S. was paying for it, needless to say. The Federal Highway Administration led this because it was a very complicated to build a highway through a tropical jungle. So they had a chance to practice their new technology on building highways. So, they led this project and there was all kinds of money going into it. The problem was, it was really a dangerous thing to do. I don't remember how somebody gave this to me, but I was responsible. Again, the White House was very interested, so I did a lot of reports on progress. We said, "We can't complete this highway until we solve the problem of foot and mouth disease." The thing is that it was an anomalous situation in that the OMB, which was then the Bureau of the Budget, was pressing us every week: do we need more money; are we going fast enough? That's because they knew the President really wanted to build this thing so he could snip the ribbon. Instead of their saying, "We can't spend this or that," they kept saying, "Do you need more money? Why aren't you going faster?" So, we said, "Well, we'll have to have a foot and mouth disease program in Colombia and we'll see if we can push foot and mouth disease back out of Colombia, at least away from where the highway would be built." Really nobody believed it could be done, but we negotiated. We negotiated an agreement with Colombia and to a lesser extent with panama and put a U.S. Agriculture mission in Colombia. I could never get the Department of Agriculture to tell me how much it would cost. I'd say, "If we run this program for five years, what will it cost?" "Well, we don't know." There were all these assistant secretaries and veterinarians at USDA, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. So, after a long time, I said, "Can you do it for five million?" "Yes." In those days, we had to get approval from the White House for this project, the money for which came from IDB, which was deadest against it, but they didn't have any choice. When you sent a memo to the White House in those days, you had to have it typed on a special typewriter. It was before the days of computers and word processors. So, for some bizarre reason, you had to go to a special office in the bureau. They typed it and kept little tapes with holes in them. I was walking down the hall with a draft that we had all agreed upon. I thought, "Five million? That's nothing. That will never do it." So, I scratched it out and put "10 million" and we sent it to the White House. They approved 10 million. We went to IDB and said, "You're going to approve $10 million for this." We started a program there. Then Nixon left the White House. The day after he left, OMB stopped the budget for the highway. That program went on for years. I heard that they extended it after the first five years. It's a really tough nut to crack. So, the highway's never been built. It's a foolish highway to build. It's one of the last untouched tropical forests in the world. Hopefully, it never will be done. But it wasn't easy to stop it when the President wanted it so that we could do the responsible thing of keeping it from becoming a vehicle for transmission of foot and mouth disease to the north.

Q: Oh, boy. Where there any other regional economic issues?

LANDBERG: 1973 was when the energy crisis happened, the price of oil went skyrocketing. Somebody assigned me to analyze the impact on Latin America. I did quite a bit of stuff on that and funneled it into the Economic Bureau and the look at what energy prices would do for developing countries. I spent a lot of time on that. That was kind of interesting. On those non-producing countries, it had a huge impact on Latin American and other countries. Later in the Economic Bureau I did work on this, too, on a worldwide scale. There was a second energy crisis. That's the one other issue I worked on. I worked on Central American country issues. As I recall, there was a Central American Free Trade Association which was not doing well. They did all the initial things well, and then when you get up to the really hard stuff, they couldn't cooperate and so on. It was collapsing. But there was nothing else that I can think of that stands out like the Darien Highway.

Q: This would be 1974 when you left.

LANDBERG: Yes. I went to Harvard for a year and studied economics. Then I went to La Paz, Bolivia, as economic officer. After I had been there a few months, the ambassador decided to combine the political and economic sections, mainly because he had to lose one body. So, he decided that he could combine the sections. The political counselor left, so I became political/economic counselor, which was a really fun job.

Q: Let's talk about Harvard first. How did you find the academic world at Harvard?

LANDBERG: Great. At one point, I was taking eight courses. My wife and I went up looking for a place to live. She was very much involved in developing a special school district in northwest Washington. She was heavily involved in that. We went up. It was really discouraging. It was hard to find a suitable place that was close in. So, we decided that she'd stay in Washington. At the time, there was not separate maintenance allowance for Foreign Service officers if your family was in the U.S. I told people, "I don't see why we shouldn't get separate maintenance allowance." They would pay for your transportation. In other words, if you would move your family, they would pay to take your household goods and all that kind of stuff. That costs several thousand dollars. They gave us an economic brush-up in the summer at FSI before going to academic training. There were a bunch of us who were going to academic training. We spent a month or six weeks at FSI. There were 40-50 guys in that group. They brushed us up on our mathematics and stuff like that. It was like a mini-FSI economic course. Some of the same people were teaching it. I got a petition and got everybody to sign it. I went to FSI and did an analysis. I said, "It costs so much thousands to move me up there. Why shouldn't she get separate maintenance allowance." They approved it. But it turned out it would only be if you were already in the U.S. for some reason, so all those guys who came back and signed my petition who had come from overseas assignments didn't get it. I didn't know that they weren't going to get it. There was some quirk in the rules, so I got separate maintenance allowance. I went up and roomed with another FSO and all I did was study. I went to class. There was an incredible wealth of resources there and great professors. So, I just took economics courses and whatever I wanted. I had a great academic year. It couldn't have been better. They were very nice at Harvard, let me do whatever I wanted to do. FSI didn't care. They just wanted you to go up and do the best you could. I had a really good academic year.

Then I went to La Paz. They offered me head of the economic section in two or three countries and a friend said Bolivia was the most interesting of the countries, so I took that and went to Bolivia.

Q: You were there from when to when?

LANDBERG: I got there in summer of '75 and left in summer of '78.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

LANDBERG: Bill Stedman, a funny guy, very conservative, but a really nice guy. I grew to like him a lot. It was quite a large embassy for such a Podunk country. The reason for it was partly because the Bolivians for some reason or other have always been able to get a lot of economic assistance out of the U.S. So, there was a big AID program. Then there was the coca program. I understand now that we have hundreds of people in Bolivia today. It wasn't anything like that then. There was relatively small, but?

What was happening? There was the Banzer government. He was a military man. But it was a relatively benign military dictatorship. They had a few political prisoners. This was when Jimmy Carter was President, so we were pushing human rights. We put a lot of heat on the Bolivians. They only had like 50 political prisoners left from the military coup. Over time, they let them all go. It was fairly stable politically and the result was that investment started to pick up. Bolivia has an immense wealth of mineral resources. It had some natural gas and oil in the eastern part of the country near Argentina, which they were peddling to Argentina. So, their economy was picking up, was doing okay. In that respect, it was not an eventful place like Vietnam or the Dominican Republic. It was basically a favorable situatiountil Banzer made a fatal mistake and decided to hold an election. He thought that everybody would welcome his being the candidate and being elected. He found out that his military friends said, "Hey, you've been in charge for a long time now. It's time for somebody else." So, he wasn't a candidate in his own election. He made a terrible boo boo. So, the political campaign was the last six or nine months of my tour there. They fixed the election. They told me they were going to fix it. That's what happened. So, I left just as the military guy won. I left just after the election. Then he was overthrown six months later and Bolivia went through a period of real chaos politically. I can remember, as soon as he announced the election, the economy started going downhill. People stopped investing. The local people started sending their money overseas. It rattled the local business community.

Q: There had been a period when the Bolivians, at least the left wing of the Bolivian student movements, were making death threats against the ambassador.

LANDBERG: That was earlier. Che Guevara was there and he was captured and killed. That was one of the reasons why the U.S. still had some interest in Bolivia. They were still concerned about the leftists. But in fact the peasants there are very conservative, so it was never a very favorable climate for a peasant uprising. But there were leftist people. All these guys were still there. When they had the election, these guys all came home. They were kind of leftist, but they were basically nationalist. They weren't communist.

Q: One had the feeling, at least at one point in the Bolivian post-World War II period, that there were real problems with the miners who would come down with some sticks of dynamite tucked in their belts. Were they much of a factor when you were there?

LANDBERG: No. There were a few strikes, but it was a military dictatorship. They had pretty tight control. When I got there, Banzer was in power for eight years. He must have come in about 1970. I didn't get there until '75. He had already been president for four or five years, so they had had quite a long run of political stability. Investment was building up. I think the world markets were reasonably favorable for their mineral products and stuff like that. I think it was a relatively favorable economic time for Bolivia and therefore the kinds of problems that cause strikes and things didn't arise. I'm sure there were some problems. The country is a very poor country. In terms of per capita income, it was the second poorest country after Haiti. Of course, Haiti was just absolutely awful. In Bolivia, if you went into the hinterland, you'd find people were living in abysmal poverty. But things were better than they had been for a long time. People had had a long stretch after the '51 overthrow of traditional government when Victor Paz came in and was president and they expropriated a lot of property. They had had political turmoil for 20-some years. Then they had the Che Guevara thing. Most people in the country favored stability and development. There was less turmoil going on. There was a little bit and there was a lot of intrigue within the military. But by and large, Banzer had a very bright bunch of people around him and they kind of kept things under control.

Q: How bad was the corruption of the drug cartels?

LANDBERG: It was bad. These cartels were down in the Santa Cruz area in the eastern part of the country. They were immensely wealthy even then. Of course, the military was totally corrupted by them. The ability to do much about it was practically zilch. I'm trying to remember if we were doing crop eradication. There was all kinds of planning. At one point, the narcotics people wanted to make me the narcotics coordinator in the embassy. I didn't like that idea. The ambassador didn't like that idea. We both felt this was an impossible situation. Bolivia is a huge country and it's got all this jungle, trackless area that nobody lives in. It had no roads. The country didn't have much in the way of road structure. There were only two paved roads in the whole country. I suppose there are 50 miles of paved roads not counting what's in cities. You could drive up into the Andes and over the other side and see coca being grown. It was legal. The peasants and the miners chewed cocoa, which dulls your hunger pain. They were trying to stamp it out in some areas, but there were huge areas where there was very difficult access. All they had to do was go back further into the hills and grow their coca. We have a massive organization there now. The coca has pretty much shifted to Colombia, where we don't have control.

I am one of those that believes we should legalize? There is no way we're going to stop the flow as long as the demand exists.

Q: You left there in summer of '78.

LANDBERG: Yes.

Q: Where did you go in '78?

LANDBERG: I came back and went to the National War College.

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Q: Today is November 16, 2001. Let's move on. We're in 1978. You are off to the National War College for a year. How did you find it?

LANDBERG: It was a nice, easy year. It was fun. At Harvard, I worked my ass off, pardon the wording. But the War College was relaxed. It was alright. They asked me if I wanted to go there and I said, "Okay," but I wasn't really asking to go there.

Q: One of the things that the War College is supposed to do is to get State Department and military and CIA and other people who were on their way up together to know each other and make contacts and understand the others' point of view.

LANDBERG: Well, I had had a tour in Vietnam where all my team was military.

It was fine. It was alright. I did have contact with the military in my next assignment, especially the Navy, over the differences we had with Indonesia over passage to the Indonesian Straits. I did have a lot of contact with the admiral, whose name was Kramer. Our lawyer in the State Department was named Kramer. There was nothing that stands out about the War College, except that it was a pleasant thing. I had a bunch of friends going there. It was a nice experience and we had some interesting things. The one thing that stands out in my mind is that we did a federal budget. I'll never forget the presentation a guy made about sewage treatment plants. One of the military guys, his part of the budget was the budget having to do with the federal support for water quality and sewage treatment plants. There were all these rules and regulations about quality control. So, some little town somewhere said, "The hell with that. It's just too difficult." So, they went ahead and built their own plant that will help and costs less than what their share would have been with federal assistance because of the falderal. I'll never forget that. That's one of the things I still recall, how much the paperwork and bureaucracy adds to the cost of things.

Q: This is a great danger. It's putting some more straws on the camel's back all the time.

LANDBERG: Yes. But the War College was fine. We got to read a lot of books. I read tons of books. I think it's a good experience.

Q: In '79, whither?

LANDBERG: Then I went to the Office of Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, and Singapore Affairs. I was the deputy director.

Q: Did you have any particular part of this action or were you deputy directing the whole thing?

LANDBERG: I deputy directed the whole thing, but also I was the economic officer for Indonesia. I also took care of all the ASEAN stuff for our office. ASEAN consisted of all those countries plus the Philippines at the time. So, although there was an economic office in the East Asia Bureau, our office had a big interest in all the economic stuff. So, I handled that. I handled Indonesian economic stuff. We had a very good political officer. Percy and I covered for each other when necessary.

Q: You were there from '79 to when?

LANDBERG: I was there for three years, '79-'81. It was a great office. The ambassador wanted me to come be political officer actually. My kids were all in high school. My wife was working. So, I decided not to do it. Nobody else in the family had the slightest interest in doing that. It probably would have been three years in Indonesia. So, I didn't do it. That was probably not the best thing for my career, to say the least.

Q: Well, family is important.

Let's talk about this '79-'81 period.

LANDBERG: It was "TIMBS." There was Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Burma, and Singapore. One of my few accomplishments that I can remember was that at the time there was the Vietnam refugee crisis. Vietnamese refugees were flooding into all the Southeast Asian countries. The Cambodian refugee crisis had begun there, too, so there were Cambodians flooding into Thailand. I got $5 million for refugee relief from a reluctant bureaucracy. But the ambassador, Mort Abramowitz, it became a real focal point. Like a million people from Cambodia flooded into Thailand along the border. It was a real humanitarian disaster. So, it was a focal point of interest within the U.S. government and internationally at that point as well as what was happening. Awful things were happening in Cambodia. Abramowitz felt that our office, which had interests in four other countries? He needed more focused attention from Washington. They took Thailand out of the office. So, most of the time I was there, probably two and a half years, it was Indonesia, Malaysia, Burma, and Singapore. We were still in the same set of offices, but they brought in a guy to be the office director for Thailand.

Q: Let's talk about Burma first. Did we have any interests there?

LANDBERG: The opium trade, a big interest. Those are impossible problems to solve. I went to all these countries. The Burmese are really nice people, but they had this big opium trade. We were engaged in a program of giving support to the Burmese military to interdict opium trade routes. So, we gave them helicopters and training. What transpired later or what came out later is what you might expect, that they use all of that to muscle in on the trade themselves and were transporting opium in U.S.-funded helicopters. It's extremely difficult when there's so much money involved. I'm sure people in the embassy must have had some idea of the fact that this was extremely difficult to ensure that it was used for what we intended it for, that our assistance was used to actually interdict opium production rather than to facilitate it. I'm sure they knew that. But it's hard to do. These countries know how to play the U.S. and make it difficult for us. That was our sole interest. It's a fairly substantial interest. I flew by helicopter into fields in Thailand where you could fly in. There were World Bank supported agriculture products growing opium poppies. So, it's extremely difficult to operate in those circumstances. As far as I can remember, that was our one and only interest in Burma. The embassy felt that, so the embassy always felt neglected, that they needed to keep them informed. You had to handle them with kid gloves. They took slight at anything that happened because they felt that they were not considered important.

Q: There was no political movement there, was there?

LANDBERG: At the time, it was run by a military dictatorship. It was a funny place. You'd go to Bangkok and there would be automobile gridlock. Then you'd go over to Rangoon. You'd look at the street and there would be a little car put-putting along. Then another one would come by. They were sort of proud of that. They don't want to become a Bangkok. They were far from it. That's a long time ago. I was just talking to somebody who took a tour out there. I don't think it's changed much.

Q: They say in Colombia the drug trade has brought in a hell of a lot of money. You have whole classes of people in Colombia who have benefited from the drug trade. But in Burma, although there is obviously a substantial market there, was that going to accounts in Bangkok or something like that?

LANDBERG: Yes. It's warlords. It's an unbelievable? The Golden Triangle is something right out of 100-200 years ago. There are warlords there and they make their income from the drug trade and they live up in these areas. It's not like international cartels. At least in those days, the opium was transported by mule-back over into Thailand. These guys stayed up and used their ill-gotten gains to maintain their groups. For a few years, I kept in touch with it, but I've lost touch now. Of course, there have been political changes. But I'll bet you it's not much different up in the Golden Triangle than it was at the time.

Q: Moving to Malaysia, I guess there were still repercussions from the pullout from Vietnam.

LANDBERG: What happened after Vietnam, it was interesting? That was one of the principal strategic lessons of what happened. They talked about the dominos all falling. Well, when we pulled out, the repercussion was that they were all so afraid of falling that they all pulled together. They formed ASEAN. They were quite effective diplomatically in Washington because the five ASEAN counties operated as a unit on many things. In other words, when they had a concern that was region-wide, all five ASEAN ambassadors would come in together. When you have five ambassadors come in, they're more likely to see a high-level official than if the ambassador of Malaysia comes on his own. We had an ASEAN dialogue. The Assistant Secretary met monthly or bimonthly with the ASEAN ambassadors. They were quite effective. It was a good way to deal with the area. The main point is that when they all did that, pulled themselves together, cooperated economically, it became stronger than they ever did as a result of the Vietnam debacle. They were so worried about being taken over.

The second thing that happened is, the U.S. adopted a fairly good policy after that. We said, "Just because we got pushed out of Vietnam, we're not turning the tail and running. We're going to maintain a presence in the area." We did a lot of things visibly to maintain the presence and to reassure ASEAN that we weren't going to abandon them and that kind of thing. So, the domino theory didn't happen. The opposite happened, as so often happens in foreign affairs.

Q: Reaction, counter-reaction.

What about dealing with the Malaysian government?

LANDBERG: There were two very good ambassadors, but by far the most articulate and smartest of the ambassadors was the Malaysian. The Singapore guy, was a nice old gentleman who was also extremely shrewd and smart and much more laidback. But this Malaysian was young and ambitious and really smart and articulate. He often was the spokesman for the group. We didn't have earthshaking problems. The main thing was to have the economic relationship mutually beneficial and for them to hang together so they wouldn't become dominos. They were far ahead of us in that. So, it wasn't a relationship that was extremely difficult to manage. There weren't Balkans-type problems. On the other hand, there were all problems of tin? A big issue with Malaysia was the U.S. tin stockpile. We had 200,000 tons of tin in our strategic stockpile. The Malaysians wanted to get the price of tin up. They actually made an effort to corner the market and drive the price up. It was a losing fight on their part because the U.S. was able to sell tin out of our tin stockpile, which we really didn't need. It was a losing fight on their part, so they lost immense amounts of money by buying up a lot of tin and thinking they could drive its price up. We sold tin and drove it down. Of course, that's what their articulate ambassador was in talking to us about all the time, that we shouldn't be doing this. But they were trying to screw the world by driving up the price of tin. We didn't let them do it. Basically, I think our office took the lead and organized the federal government to make sure that they didn't take advantage of their effort to control the market. Mark Ridge was their agent. Prime Minister Mahathir was the guy that? I think he became Prime Minister while I was in the office. Here he is, 27 years later, as Prime Minister. He did an incredibly stupid thing and tried to hornswaggle us into going along with it. That didn't work.

Q: Was there any support for that within the State Department?

LANDBERG: Aside from our ambassador in Kuala Lumpur? No. It wasn't widely known what was going on.

Q: Our ambassador was taken in by them?

LANDBERG: Yes, he was. He began to represent them, so he would send all these telegrams to us saying, "We've got to be nice to the Malaysians." But there was no good reason to be nice to them in their effort to drive up tin prices. So, he didn't get his way. In Malaysia, that was the only big issue.

We did do something else. We arrangeand I basically did this? At the time, we were members of the International Tin Agreement. Its headquarters was in London. There was some agreement that had to have an importer? Maybe it was the Tin Marketing? We arranged for it to be located in Kuala Lumpur and to be announced by Secretary Shultz. The ASEAN foreign ministers meet once a year. After their meeting, they have a meeting with the other interested parties. For most years, the secretaries of state attend that meeting, as does the Japanese foreign minister and stuff like that. We arranged to have that, for him to announce that we supported putting the headquarters there in Kuala Lumpur. As far as I'm aware, it still is. But we wisely pulled out of the Tin Agreement, I think.

Q: Was Lee Kwan Yew doing his thing?

LANDBERG: Lee Kwan Yew was there. He would tell the U.S. presidents how to run the world. He came to Washington.

Q: Did we have a special Lee Kwan Yew brief? Was Singapore and Lee Kwan Yew handled with a different pair of gloves?

LANDBERG: I wouldn't say that, but he was a very smart guy. When he came to Washington, he usually was able to see the President and tell him how to run the world. He was a very shrewd, hard-nosed guy. I think he gave good advice. That was known, so people were basically happy to have him come. I don't know if he came every year, but he came pretty frequently.

Q: While you were dealing with this, were we keeping an eye on Vietnam to see what was happening there?

LANDBERG: The big issue of my time there was the Vietnam refugees. I personally did help get money for this Cambodian program, which was a drop in the bucket. There was no money to help these people. Once the attention was focused on it, I'm sure many millions went, but there was nothing until then. But the refugees were washing up on the shores of Indonesia and Malaysia. There were pirates. They were stopping boats and raping the women and murdering people and robbing them. Then there was the question of organizing? The ASEAN countries considered this a huge burden for them because here were several million people who spread all over that area, washed up on shores. We certainly felt a moral obligation to those people. So, we urged these countries to treat them well, to put them in camps, not starve them to death or anything like that, and to take them. The Malaysians especially, since that's one of the closest places, were pushing them away. They were going out and saying, "You can't land here. Go somewhere else." Of course, they'd go out to see and their boats would sink and people, kids, and women, were drowning and being preyed upon by mostly Malaysian pirates. I give Dick Holbrooke, who was the Assistant Secretary during this period, a lot of credit for banging their heads together and saying, "This is a humanitarian crisis" and banging the heads of people in the United States and saying, "This is a humanitarian crisis. We have a moral responsibility to these people." The ones who are fleeing are the ones who were associated with us by and large. We got all these countries into accepting them, but only on the basis there would be international support and support for taking them off as refugees and we took the largest part by far. So, we were the big gainers probably. The Japanese wanted to maintain ethnic purity, so they put in money. They put in a lot of money. So, we really put the screws to the Japanese. They put in billions of dollars for refugee support. We sent out consular? A lot of them were civilian volunteers. We sent all these people out to work in the refugee camps. There was an orderly process. All of that happened not because of me, but because Dick Holbrooke said we had to do something. Our office played a part in it because they were our countries. A lot of our time was taken up with refugee affairs. I think it's a big credit to the United States that we did that. We could have washed our hands. The people in the U.S. government had not a wit of interest in this except in the East Asia Bureau and probably a few higher level people in the State Department. It was Dick Holbrooke who mobilized the bureau and the government and banged these countries' heads together. He did a fine thing.

Q: Did you get involved with going after other countries to get them to take people in?

LANDBERG: We didn't very much, no. The Refugee Bureau took? Once the principle was established that the international community had to do something, it was handled by the people who know how to handle these things. My wife's cousin and her husband took three Vietnamese in. One arrived at age 15 speaking no English and graduated almost at the top of his class in mathematics at the University of Minnesota. That's the kind of people?

Q: Oh, yes. We came out way ahead. Burma has no political life. Malaysia and Singapore are stable.

LANDBERG: Singapore runs like a watch. Everything is neat, orderly, clean, and well planned.

Q: I talked to someone who was ambassador there who said that you get underneath the surface and it's not that great.

LANDBERG: It's kind of sterile.

Q: There's a lot more crime and things going on that you don't really? You learn how to work with it.

LANDBERG: That's probably so, but it's still a very efficient place. They're trying to and they're Chinese. They're very well organized and hard working. Leaving aside those regional issues which were so important with refugees? Your question was, "What about the aftermath of Vietnam?" That was the big impression that we had. The big effect on our bureau was the refugee crisis. Once it was seen that there wasn't going to be any big threat from Vietnam, I think Vietnam just became another one of the countries we watched. It began to dawn in those years that the whole war was a huge mistake and that Vietnam and China were not going to get along and there wasn't going to be a giant communist presence in Asia, that, in fact, they were going to continue their historic antagonism between the two and that was just fine with us. There wasn't a lot to do but wait until the day came when we could reestablish relations.

Q: We come to Indonesia.

LANDBERG: That's the big one. A very sensitive bunch of people, very sensitive to their relationship to the United States. When I joined that office, Suharto had been in power 15 years. The Indonesian picture of politics is the shadow play. Reality is a shadow on the wall. So, the Indonesians' politics is full of intrigue and double crossing and stuff like that. They think the whole world is like that, so whatever we did, they thought there was some hidden motive. The simplest things, they would wonder what it was. Often, there wasn't one. They spent a lot of time on the relationship. We were giving $100 million worth of PL480 rice to Indonesia. The first year I was there, AID wanted to eliminate it. They just came in and said, "We're going to eliminate it. They don't need it anymore." Of course, the Indonesians saw it as we still loved them. So, I spent a lot of my first year eventually resulting in a 50% cut, which is probably what AID really wanted anyway. I told them, "That's the best we can do" and that we still loved them. But a lot of time was spent on that.

We had a big AID mission. At the time, there was a huge World Bank? At the time, China was not a member of the World Bank. It was just beginning to be. So, there was great worry in Indonesia? I think Indonesia was the largest World Bank recipient. There was a huge amount of development financing going on.

The other big issue that we had was the whole question of access to the Indonesian Straits. We had a difference of opinion with them about the freedom of the seas. The Indonesians for sovereignty reasons wanted to basically control access or at least have the image of control. The Navy didn't want to have any hindrance on their ability to sail through on the way to Guam whenever they went into Guam. That turned out to be my biggest issue even though? I basically managed that issue. I spent an immense amount of time on it. In the end, we worked out a sort of compromise. I can't remember what it was except that it was face saving for all concerned, even for Admiral Kramer. What the Indonesians wanted was notification. If the Seventh Fleet was going to sail through one of those routes between the islands, they wanted notification. The Navy said, "We don't give notification. This is under international law." The Law of the Sea Treaty was being negotiated at the time. One of the leaders of the negotiation for developing countries was Indonesian, a very sharp guy. Elliott Richardson was our special negotiator for that. Because of this issue, it was an issue in the Law of the Sea Agreement. So, I spent a lot of time with his lawyer, Kramer. Elliott Richardson is a fantastic guy. We had lots of discussions. In the end, the U.S. withdrew. It didn't sign the Law of the Sea Agreement. But nevertheless, this was played out in that context. In the end, we did not notify and they did not ask, but somehow there was going to be a way in which they would know we were coming. This was the most sensitive issue in the relationship with Indonesia and that took up a lot of my three years. Near the end of that time was when we reached the agreement that satisfied all concerned.

Q: Were we looking at that time as far as to the economic stability of Indonesia and the Suharto family, the corruption and all, which eventually brought it down?

LANDBERG: They were a very shrewd bunch. Just as they portrayed the world, there was a lot of intrigue. So, you never knew? It was a very complex type of relationship and not above board. In other words, people with titles - like the commander in chief of the army - might not be the real person with power. I would say that they had it well in hand. I don't think anybody saw any signs that anything would go wrong until Suharto finally passed away. I didn't think he would last as long as he did. He was there from 1965-1998. That's 33 years, a pretty good run. He was there for a long time. Almost everybody felt that as long as he was there and this bunch of very shrewd people was running things, there wouldn't be a problem. The problem would come just like when Tito died, when Suharto finally would fall from power. I don't think stability was considered a big thing. The relationship was considered big. It's a big country with the fourth or fifth largest population in the world. But it's way out there?

Q: And it really doesn't have an awful lot of impact.

LANDBERG: The military is concerned with maintaining stability. They're always worried that the Chinese are going to come and invade them, but in fact, who would want to invade them? They have no interests? The only real long-term issue might be Australia with all that land there. But a lot of Australia's land isn't very good. The Australians spent a lot of time tending the relationship with Indonesia. I don't think anybody sees in the geostrategic sense a big problem there. I don't know if they do today.

Q: What you're describing is still pretty much it. There are some countries that emanate their problems and Indonesia is not one of them.

LANDBERG: East Timor was a big headache. It was a continuing headache because of the human rights movement in the United States. A fairly well organized small group of Timorese who kept the thing alive? So, we were constantly dealing with the human rights movement's in the U.S. concerns about human rights. We were always pressing the Indonesians to take it easy and not commit atrocities and stuff like that. The Indonesians probably moderated what they did, but they had no intention of giving up East Timor. But I think we might have had a marginal influence on the way they treated people. There were political prisoners in East Timor through all this period. It seems to me we and others in the international humanitarian movement managed to persuade them to let some of these people go and reduce the number of political? I know we spent a lot of time on it.

Q: Were we at all looking at the prisoners who had been taken during the time when Suharto took over?

LANDBERG: That was another humanitarian concern. Fifteen years later, there were still communists imprisoned in Indonesia. There were 50-100,000. They pretty much were not going to let those people loose. They said, "These are people who are cause for instability. We're not going to let them loose." So, we would talk about humanitarianism, but I don't think the United States had any interest in trying to destabilize Indonesia or tell them how to run their country.

Q: Did we find that we were in a certain amount of competition with Japan?

LANDBERG: Economically, yes. The Japanese are such great marketers and use every bit of their skill to get the market. It was very hard to compete with the Japanese in these countries. On the other hand, everybody dislikes them. All these countries were occupied by the Japanese and the Japanese were brutal occupiers. Those countries still remember that. On the other hand, the Japanese sell great stuff at cheap prices, so it was extremely difficult? For example, we had automobile sales in Indonesia, General Motors. It's a huge country, so there was a market there. But it was awfully hard to compete with a Japanese automobile. I keep thinking of these issues we have.

Another issue which hardly anybody would ever know about was to put a liquefied natural gas plant in California. I spent an immense amount of time on this. There is a huge oil field in Sumatra where Mobil Oil produces liquefied natural gas, all of which at the time was shipped to Japan. Japan switched over because of environmental reasons to clean energy as much as it could. Liquefied natural gas is a great source of energy. Pacific Gas and Electric wanted to build a plant in California. You have to have this big plant. When a tanker comes in that's got this liquefied natural gas, you put it in in the plant and then it's deliquefied. Environmentally, it's very desirable. So, PGNE spent at least $100-200 million in the planning for this. The problem was, where they wanted to put their plant was right on top of what geologists call an "active fault." An active fault means that it's moved in the last 10,000 years. This means it could move tomorrow. It's right on the coast. It was a huge range. The owners were selling this property to PGNE. Nearby, some housing had gone up and the people were terrified that someday there would be an earthquake and all this liquefied gas would go into the atmosphere and would drift down to them and blow them up, as well it could have. The U.S. government is one of the most complex instruments in the world. We had the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission [FERC]. They surfaced during the last energy crisis. To get the permit to build that plant requires a permit from the FERC. I spent a lot of time because we were promoters of this. The ambassador thought it was a good thing. The U.S. government on the foreign policy side thought this was a good thing and would be good energy wise, would cement our relationship with them, would from their point of view give a little bit of competition to Japan being the only market. Everybody wanted to do this except for that damned FERC. I got tagged with helping to deal with it. I'll never forget going and seeing the guy at FERC one time. I used to go and see him all the time. He said, "This plant will never be built." It never was. We had five issues and that was one of them. The Indonesians couldn't understand why we couldn't build this plant. If it had been any other country, you just would build the damn plant. You don't pay any attention to faults and stuff. I guess they didn't understand this is California, where you have these big earthquakes. They saw some kind of convoluted thing that we were using for some other purpose. Everything was like we'd say, "Yes," and we would build the plant and everything would be fine. But it never happened.

Q: Did Congress or staff members intrude in this type of thing?

LANDBERG: A little bit. There were some people interested. But PGNE did its own lobbying. I don't recall that there was any congressional pressure at all on us on that issue. Then most of the other issues, like Law of the Sea, are so esoteric that nobody in the world really understands them. There were some people thathe Foreign Relations Committewho had an interest in Indonesia but basically I think there's not that much interest. Congress is not a big factor in this. For the purpose of your historical record here, Dick Holbrooke did what I always thought was a brilliant thing. There was a Monday morning bureau staff meeting. He would invite a congressman or senator to come and attend the staff meeting. He would first have them in his office and they'd have a cup of coffee and a donut or something. The staff meeting was at 9:00 or 9:30. In they would come, Dick and this congressman. It wasn't every staff meeting, but at least once a month, he would have them come in. It was a normal staff meeting. Dick said, "Say whatever you want." There was no censorship on what we could say. The congressman would sit there and have a chance to ask questions. The congressional view of State Department stripe pants, cookie pushers who aren't really very knowledgeable, and then they hear people talk about their countries in a very sophisticated way. They would come away impressed. Most of the people he brought must have been on an East Asia subcommittee. I remember John Glenn being there once. I was acting director of this office for long periods of time. So, I often was at these staff meetings. I remember John Glenn being there. They had a chance to talk. They see that Foreign Service people aren't idiots. The result was that when Dick really needed something on the Hill, he had credibility. He could go to people on the two East Asian committees in the Senate and the House and they'd know what they're dealing with. They'd know him personally and would understand what the East Asia Bureau did and what kind of issue it was. It was a magnificent public relations thing. When I went to the ARA after that, I suggested that. They were horrified at the idea that you would let a congressman into a staff meeting and actually let him hear what State Department people were talking about. But I thought it was brilliant. I don't know that it ever had a negative?

Q: ARA, of course, had the problem with Senator Helms and his staff.

LANDBERG: I don't think it did back then so much. There were always problems, but I don't think it was something that?

Q: I think most of the time when people come across the government at work, they find out these are serious people dealing with serious problems which they know quite a bit about.

LANDBERG: That's right. That was the beauty of what Dick did. I mentioned that to several other people in bureaus in my years in Washington. Nobody had ever heard of doing such a thing and wouldn't think of it. They all thought it was insane to let them come and hear what you actually talked about.

Q: In '81, you moved on.

LANDBERG: In '81, I was going to go to the Congressional Relations Bureau to be the East Asia person and took off for the summer and went to the West Coast. When I came back, the guy in that job decided to extend and they let him. So, I was kind of without a job. So, I took a job that actually turned out to be very interesting in the Economic Bureau as the executive assistant to our ambassador to the Paris Club. The Paris Club in the simple form renegotiates official debts with countries that are going broke. This was just at the beginning of the international debt crisis of the 1980s. The countries were countries that nobody cared about, so it wasn't considered an international debt crisis. Then Mexico had its debt crisis and that suddenly made it into an international debt crisis.

Q: You were doing that from '81 to when?

LANDBERG: To '83.

Q: Who was the ambassador to these negotiations?

LANDBERG: Chuck Meissner, who was on the plane with the Secretary of Commerce, Ron Brown, and got killed on the coast of Yugoslavia. They were in a storm. Chuck had been at the Treasury Department. His wife Doris then was commissioner of the INS. A brilliant guy, a brilliant economist, and a very good negotiator. I learned a lot from him and got to go and do some of the negotiating. We also dealt with some of the OECD development issues. He was called a special negotiator for economic affairs. At the time, what was happening was, developing countries were going broke. He was trying to get more Washington attention. We could see the trend. Each year, all these Eastern European countries were going broke. He was trying to get more attention to that, but nobody pays attention to things unless it's really important. Mexico had its crisis and suddenly there was an international debt crisis, but it had been building up for several years. The Paris Club does a lot more than just renegotiate official debt because you can't really renegotiate official debt without taking into account the overall debt situation of the country. In effect, what the Paris Club with the people who do the private debt negotiations do is to restructure the economy of the country. How many people know that this international group restructured Poland's economy? Poland's coal exports went into a fund which was then used to pay its restructured debt. The way in which the economy was run and managed was also changed. Poland, which was still a communist country with the Warsaw Pact, had its debt restructured by the Paris Club and foreign banks, many of whom were American. So, that's what the Paris Club did. It was sort of the vehicle for dealing with the official debt, which meant bilateral official debt government to government, the World Bank, the IMF, and stuff like that. So, we had the big powers of the world would sit down and, in effect, say to a country, "Here is how you have to structure your economy now. You won't have to pay your debt back except on new terms. This is how you have to manage it." It had a huge influence on the global economy. So, that was kind of a fun thing to do. I never became a great expert, but Chuck was a terrific expert.

Q: Did you find that you were running into the north-south conflict, the rich nations of the north?

LANDBERG: That was why one of my things that came over to mand that was global negotiations. Ronald Reagan went down to an LDC summit in Cancun. At that summit, the Group of 77 got together and they wanted to negotiate the international economy. They thought if they could sit down with the United States, Europe, and Japan, they could negotiate something from which they would benefit. Ronald Reagan said, "Well, that doesn't seem unreasonable." He agreed to that. So, the U.S. government spent the rest of the time until it finally collapsed backing out of that commitment. When people thought about it, they said, "What are we going to negotiate? Are we going to have 77 countries and they're going to negotiate tariff terms where we have the GATT, for example? Do they want to negotiate how the IMF and the World Bank? They're going to sit down and negotiate terms with the Group of 77, who really basically just want to get more assistance out of the international system. Nothing doing. We're not going to do that." But you couldn't say that. So, what we did say was, "Well, yes, we made that promise, but we have to figure out how we're going to do this. What's the mechanism going to be?" We played it out in my time. That was one of the things I did. A lot of the countries finally realized the U.S. was not going to sit still for having a global system negotiated with little developing countries which, taken all together, their GNP is smaller than California's probably.

The other thing is, I think more and more developing countries are realizing that they had to privatize. They weren't going to make it by getting the developing countries to come and help them; they were going to have to do it on their own. I think a lot of countries sort of lost interest in this idea that they were going to negotiate. It was a playing field for prima donnas from these developing countries, one of whom was this guy from Mexico who was a pain in the ass. He was a very smart guy. I think a lot of the Group of 77 countries began to back away from it, too. So, just by staving it off, it kind of died.

Q: Inclusive in the idea of forgiving debts is that if you forgive debts, you're never going to lend money again.

LANDBERG: That's right. That's the point of debt renegotiation. As Chuck always said, "The purpose of what we're doing is to make these countries creditworthy so they will get international financing and direct investment. That is what we're trying to do. It's not that we're trying to screw them or anything. We're trying to put them back in a position where they're creditworthy." The debt crisis was happening at the very same time as these global negotiations. Clearly, for most of the countries, the reason this was happening was the international oil problem and OPEC. All of a sudden, some countries were getting huge gains, but most of them were really getting hurt. The result was that they were trying to produce more and more raw materials in order to cover their oil costs. As they did that, the price of everythintin, wheat, etc. started going south. When it did that, they couldn't cover their debt servicing. So, I think a lot of countries realized that they had to focus on their own problems and that the idea that we would all get together and renegotiate the global system was just a pipe dream. Most of the serious countries pulled out of it. There were only a couple of prima donnas that really tried to keep it alive.

Q: Here the United States is one of the principal holders of these debts and so was probably the principal player at that time. But what about France, Britain, Germany, and so on? Was there a divergence in attitudes?

LANDBERG: No. Of course, the purpose of the Paris Club was to equalize the pain. That is, if you take Mexico for example, where probably the lion's share of the foreign debt was to American banks, let's say 60%... But everybodthe French, the Germans, and the Britisall have their economic interests, their trade interests, in Mexico. They all extend credit. So, if France had 10% of the official debt in the form of probably export financing or something like that, the idea of the Paris Club was to sit down and equalize the burden. So, you weren't just negotiating with the country, you were negotiating with all the countries who were part of the Paris Club. Let's take Bolivia, where we were providing bilateral aid but the French might be providing export financing. From one point of view, while we give economic assistance, it's not directly tied to our trade benefits, whereas the French are directly involved with trade. Therefore, you could argue the case. If the Bolivians were to go broke, the French are less deserving of having their debt covered than the U.S., which has provided economic assistance. Or it's the other way around, that our economic assistance wasn't something we really expected to get back. You'd negotiate those issues and come out with something? It had to be done in conjunction with all the private banks because it was private bank financing. You worked it all out so there was some equitable treatment of creditors. As Chuck would say all the time, it puts the subject country back on a creditworthy basis within a few years so that you could resume normal trade and financing.

Q: The other major lending countries and the United States were all pretty much on the same track.

LANDBERG: Yes.

Q: So often you find that the French are going off this way or that way.

LANDBERG: That was the whole point. If they did, you'd never get it resolved. The whole point of this was to have a place - it was done in Pariwhere you could all sit down where the players knew each other. Usually, this kind of thing only happened in the '70s. We're talking about a long time ago. In the 1970s, it was a handful of countries that had to be rescheduled, but it began to build up when the oil prices went up. The number of countries that were struggling began to increase. That year I started in that office, it seemed to me we had like seven or nine restructurings in the Paris Club. That was a lot more business than we ever had before. All of a sudden, it began to be more serious than just one country that happened to try to stick its creditors.

Q: Today in the academic world and also on the street to a certain extent, the left-wing has taken globalization as being bad. Was that in the wind when you were there?

LANDBERG: No.

Q: So you didn't have street demonstrations and that sort of thing.

LANDBERG: For one thing, those demonstrators are totally off base in how it works. The things they're saying are totally absurd. But at the time, these were kind of esoteric things. The international financial trading system is a very complicated, intricate thing. As we're seeing now after September 11th, it doesn't take too much of a jolt to throw all of it out of kilter. At the time, when Romania and Poland went broke, who cared? Most Americans would have never known. Most of the international community would have never known. I think partly it's because there are true believers out there that need an issue. But there wasn't anything like that at the time. Most of the world was ignorant of the fact that these East European countries were going broke. When things eased up, they had borrowed a lot of money and all of a sudden they couldn't pay off. But there were other countries, too. There were a few Latin American countries. We did Costa Rica. Costa Rica went broke. This didn't exist at the time. At least I don't remember that we paid any attention to something like that.

Q: This was '81-'83.

LANDBERG: Then in '83, Chuck decided to leave the State Department. He went back to work in New York for a bank. He got an offer he couldn't refuse, he said. So, he moved to New York. I went over to the Office of Mexican Affairs and became Deputy Director in the very last month of 1983.

Q: You did that from December '83 to when?

LANDBERG: I did that until I retired and then one year after that. The year after that, I was just a WAE.

Q: When did you retire?

LANDBERG: In 1987. Then I stayed in the office of Mexican Affairs a little over a year. On October 1, 1988, I was appointed to the Foreign Service Grievance Board because there was a presidential meeting. I had organized five presidential meetings. Because of that meeting coming up, I stayed in Mexican Affairs as a WAE. The meeting was in September or October. I didn't join the Board for a couple of months. But technically, it was the first of October. Because they did the appointments on a fiscal year basis, I was appointed to the Foreign Service Grievance Board in that year. I remained on the Board for eight years. It's the best job I ever had.

Q: I take it you had really given up the foreign side of the Foreign Service.

LANDBERG: Yes, but my wife was heavily? In '88, she ran for and was elected to the DC Board of Education. One son was still in high school. The other son was in college. I guess I wasn't that motivated to go overseas. I came back from Bolivia in '78 and I retired in '87. It was nine years.

Q: During the time you were doing Mexican affairs both straight and then as WAE, because you were doing essentially the same job, which would be from when to when?

LANDBERG: It was December of '83 until the fall of '88, basically five years.

Q: What were the issues that really engaged you?

LANDBERG: These things always come in fives, don't they? There was first the economic. Immigration was always? In Nicaragua and Central America, there was the most sensitive subject. The border issues, which included Tijuana sewage. What would be the fifth one?

Q: You were well prepared for the debt situation there.

LANDBERG: Yes.

Q: How did the State Department react to that?

LANDBERG: We bailed them out. For what other country in the world would we come up with like five billion dollars overnight? We bailed them out. We had to. What choice did we have? You have to keep in mind that the war against the Contras in Nicaragua was the hot issue. Remember Oliver North and whatever we did with the Iranians to get money. The Iran-Contra stuff was all happening during the time I was in the Office of Mexican Affairs. The Mexicans would try to help us, but at the time they were the kind of friends? You should have such enemies. The Mexicans would profess to help us but in fact always threw monkey wrenches into all of our diplomatic efforts. So, between high level Washington and Mexico, there was a lot of animosity on the part of the U.S. high level policymakers. They felt the Mexicans really weren't helping us even though they professed to and instead would always try to screw us. So, it was a very difficult issue. But at the same time, while we had this part of our relationship, which was full of a lot of conflict and hostility, we had this huge economic relationship with Mexico and a border relationship with millions of people crossing the border every day.

The border on the U.S. side was terribly impacted by the Mexican debt crisis because the Mexicans had basically run out of foreign exchange, so they weren't buying. A lot of middle and upper class Mexicans drive to the border and do their purchasing of clothes and TVs and so on. All of a sudden, that stopped, so that was a problem. So, you had all the border state congressmen and senators concerned about Mexico. It was basically a complex but sort of mutually beneficial economic relationship. So, when Mexico suddenly went broke and notified the Treasury that "Next week, we're going to miss our debt payments," it galvanized Washington into action. Overnight, they put together this? It was like 15 billion dollars. We didn't put it all in, but we got the IMF and the Europeans and everybody to put in a few bucks. But like overnight, we put in five billion dollars in cash. The administration was criticized.

Q: They always are.

LANDBERG: Then the migration problem was never a very big bilateral problem. It didn't approach in scope what it has been recently in terms of visibility in the relationship. It was always there. You always had to talk about migration, illegal immigration, and treatment of Mexicans, etc., but it was just an item on the agenda. Half the time, when the presidents met, you put it on the agenda and they never even mentioned it. They would just go on to the important things, which were Nicaragua, economics, and some international stuff. This was the period when the Mexicans were still holding us off at arms' length. So, they also would vote with the Soviets in the UN, which just drove Washington insane. They were our neighbor, but they would vote with the Communist Bloc.

Q: I've heard people say that foreign affairs? Mexico doesn't really play much of a role in foreign affairs internationally, but it's given as the plaything of the left while the serious people get on with economic relationships in the United States.

LANDBERG: In Mexico, too. The whole [inaudible] is full of leftists and the rest of the country and the government says, "You leftists can kick the U.S. in the shins. That keeps the leftist part of the Mexican society happy and it's a nationalistic good thing. The rest of us will conduct a mutually beneficial relationship of some normality with the United States." What has happened is a remarkable thing. It began to happen during my time in Mexican Affairs and it's continued with NAFTA is that that leftist element disappeared. The current foreign minister probably was a communist. He's a masterful user of the press. But I don't hear him saying all of this stuff about how we're screwing Mexico. John Gavin was our ambassador during almost my entire time there. I have probably a personal view about this that is not shared by probably very many people in Washington: he was able to say things to the Mexicans, for which they hated him, that no U.S. ambassador has ever been able to say, and it had a salutary effect, which was, "Why don't you grow up, stop blaming the United States for all your problems, and start dealing with them yourself?" He said those things practically the way I just said them. The Mexicans would say, "My god, how can you say this? We're little Mexico. We've been screwed by you gringos all these years. You can't say those things" and they tried to get him removed, but of course he was [close to] Ronald Reagan. He said those things. No other ambassador in history to Mexico could possibly? Everybody in Mexico knew him. He speaks perfect Spanish, beautiful Spanish. His mother was Mexican. He knows the country well. He's an arrogant SOB and he would say these things to the Mexicans that drove them wild, but in fact, some of them said, "Somehow, the Mexicans that got in charge of the government when De La Madrid came in, they started saying, 'Hey, we've got to move on or we're going to fall into the dust.'" They more or less shelved that stuff, with difficulty, grudgingly, over the last 10 years.

Q: You were dealing with the shockwaves of the ambassador doing this.

LANDBERG: Yes. He was a friend of Ronald Reagan's. He said and did what he pleased. So, he ignored the bureaucracy. The relationship with the office was an interesting one and, in fact, a fairly close one in many ways. I can bore you with the trivia of this. It's an interesting story. Essentially, he was suspicious of Foreign Service and the State Department. He felt he knew Mexico better than anybody and that he knew how to handle Mexico, that he had Ronald Reagan's backing, and he wasn't about to listen to any Secretary or Assistant Secretary of State or office director or deputy office director or anybody else. Furthermore, he kind of drove his DCM out and he appointed a former junior FSO who had quit the State Department, appointed him as a de facto DCM, a young, very smart guy. It was mainly that he felt he knew best and he would articulate our policy. People in the State Department didn't like that. And he did things that upset our bureaucracy. At the time, the air pollution in Mexico City was absolutely abysmal. People were sick. Kids would get sick. He felt the embassy, which had no air conditioning, ought to have air conditioning installed. Of course, in Washington, nobody gave a damn about air conditioning in Mexico City. If you're in the Foreign Service, you go there and you suffer, right? So, he tried through the normal processes to get air conditioning, to get it approved. Whoever handles these things said, "Nothing doing" and so he went to the Congress and had them put it in the appropriation. It just drove them wild in the State Department that they dictated that "You will put air conditioning in the embassy." I think that they dragged it on and on. I don't know if they ever got their air conditioning. But he did things like that that bucked the entrenched bureaucracy and so they disliked him for that. The Mexicans disliked him because he was so flashy. Everybody knew him. He kind of upstaged them. They all wanted to go to his house for dinner. They all wanted to be seen with him because here was this glamorous movie star that speaks beautiful Spanish and is very charming. He could charm a bird out of a tree. At the same time, he'd say these things like, "Why don't you guys grow up" or he would have the temerity to say, "You're not doing a good job of protecting American tourists." There were some awful murders, bandits. Some families in cars were killed. He said it publicly. Then he said, "And furthermore, we're going to have a tourist advisory" I think only notifying the Consular Bureau when he did it. He said, "You've got to protect tourists. This is a big part of your economy and these awful things are happening." The Mexicans started patrols and improved security. I think he did very good things, but he pretty much did things his way. He incurred a lot of resentment amongst Mexicans and Washington, but he had his friends in Ronald Reagan and some other people in the government and he had a pretty good relationship with Congress. He and I were shopping in a Safeway one time and my wife came along with us. He was really a handsome man. Women just fell all over themselves when they saw Jack Gavin, even though he was beginning to lose his hair. It was an interesting period. The Mexican economy was collapsing. The technocrats that came in, that took it over, who were some really fine economists, understood what was happening and why and said, "We've got to turn this around and we can't be fighting with the U.S. all the time and turn it around." Maybe they changed the relationship. I think it began under De La Madrid and has continued up to this time.

Q: Were we at all disturbed about the PRI's monopoly on power?

LANDBERG: No. I think that to its credit, Washington basically kept mum about that. It was well recognized that if there was anything they resented about us, it would be our trying to interfere in their domestic things. On the other hand, I think it was clear? A lot of people felt Mexico was unstable, that the communists after they secured victory in Nicaraguthe dominos would fall. There were people who believed this. Congressmen believed it, that the domino would fall and we'd have the communists on our doorstep, that this was an unstable system. People didn't want to rock the boat. So, I don't think that there was? Of course, a country that big on our bordepeople spent a lot of time looking at was there instability, was there a threat? Is the debt and economic crisis going to result in an overthrow with the communists taking over? There were papers and studies. The CIA did stuff. I guess people were concerned, but I think the net result was that 1) it's not that unstable and 2) the worst thing we could do was try to do something about it. The result was that the idea was to do all of the things we could to strengthen the economy.

Q: Did we almost give up as far as thinking of Mexico as being a player in the Central American equation?

LANDBERG: Yes, I think so. We had several special ambassadors for Central America. Harry Shlaudeman was one.

Q: Philip Habib.

LANDBERG: There was another guy. I forget who it was. Anyway, I think they found at that particular time that dealing with the Mexican foreign ministry was just impossible. I think Shlaudeman or somebody flew down there once to have a meeting. I think they finally decided that Mexico would be of no help and the best we could hope is that they wouldn't hinder us too much. George Shultz got to the point where he wouldn't speak to Mexico's foreign minister because he felt that the foreign minister had promised to help and then stabbed him in the back. So, every year, there is the OAS general assembly. I'm told that Shultz refused to speak to him. So, that's an example. It was a little tense.

Q: The relationship? They've got cities straddling the border. You have states that practically have their own embassies. The web of contacts between Mexico? It's true in Canada, too.

LANDBERG: And also between the governments. If the guy in the Fish and Wildlife Service wanted to call his counterpart in Mexico, he picked up the phone and talked to him. There was smuggling of rare birds across the border. The rare birds came from the Brazilian jungle. They were smuggled up and across Mexico into the U.S. So, the Fish and Wildlife Service, or whoever stops this kind of thing or is concerned about it in both countries and corroborated. You find that in every possible way. We are not as integrated with them as we are with Canada, but we will be in about 20 years and we are exceptionally integrated in many ways. Then all of the people on the border, the mayors all know one another and the governors? That's why George Bush, I'm sure he knows the governors on the other side of the border well. They have their personal relationships. The police and the fire departments know each other. They cooperate. There is a lot of corruption on the Mexican side. So, it's a little world of the border. It's very interesting. The common joke was about the Washington official that came down to speak at one of the border meetings. Somebody asked, "Is it true that you officials in Washington are ignorant and unconcerned about our problems down on the border?" The official scratched his head and said, "Well, I don't know and I don't care." We have a functioning bilateral border environmental agreement. That was a big thing. In addition to that, we had the U.S.-Mexico International Boundary and Water Commission. That is technically part of the Office of Mexican Affairs. In fact, a long-time guy who was a great asset to the office worked in Mexican Affairs. But it's actually run out of a central office on the U.S. side in El Paso and on the Mexican side on the other side of the border in Juarez. It regulates for flood control and power, the Rio Grande River. There are dams that have been built on the Rio Grande that are jointly constructed, jointly run. They each have a little box that's together in the middle of the dam. On one side are the Mexicans and on the other side are the Americans. They run the dam. When there is a lot of rain upriver? They literally regulate how much water goes and how it's distributed into Mexico and into the United States. That's been going on for 30, 40, 50 years. It's very successful. Who's ever heard of it?

Q: That's why it's successful.

LANDBERG: That's right. The only people who have heard about it are the congressmen and senators right on the border. So, we have a lot of mechanisms of cooperation that worked just fine and it doesn't make any difference what the foreign minister might have said about Nicaragua last week. It had no influence on those practical, day to day things. The International Boundary and Water Commission? Because they have a lot of expertise, they got involved with the bilateral environmental agreement. Some of that water is sewage, especially in Tijuana, which is higher, so the sewage runs down into San Diego and enrages the San Diegans. I spent a lot of time on sewage treatment in Tijuana. There are all these things. They don't have an independent life and it's part of the relationship. I think that they're actually very strong. You could have bickering about the Contras and crap like that that had practically no influence on most of the relationship. A notary came in on a Friday and told the Secretary of the Treasury, "We're going to default." Over the weekend, we put together five billion dollars to bail them out. There wasn't any thought of the Contras or anything like that. They had to do it. So, it's like there were two relationships. I think now it's one relationship. I think now with NAFTA and stuff like that, most of that animosity that's historically based has sort of been submerged. I'm sure some is still there, but it really has taken a backseat in the relationship. It's amazing. Just like the fall of the Berlin Wall. It's a sea change in the relationship with Mexico.

Q: You went to the Grievance Board for a tour. What were you doing there?

LANDBERG: The Grievance Board is the appeals board for the grievance process for all of the foreign service agencies, which were five at the time: USIA, USCA, State, AID, and Foreign Agricultural Service. The Foreign Service has its own personnel system and its own act, the Foreign Service Act. In there is a section that sets up the Foreign Service Grievance Board. That's to be composed of nine employees of the Department of State. You have to be retired. It's composed of about 20-some people, about half of whom were retired FSOs and the other half were labor relations professionals, mostly arbitrators. It decides on appeals. It's an appellate court. If you file a grievance with your agency, like the State Department, and the State Department denies your grievance so you're not satisfied with the results, you can appeal to the Foreign Service Grievance Board and it will decide your grievance.

A lot of people, when I told them I was on the Foreign Service Grievance Board, thought I was in the State Department Grievance Office. That deals in the first instance with State Department grievances. This was an appeals board.

Q: I have the impression from other people that particularly on a gender or race issue, the State Department always loses just because the political winds are such? I get from other people that there are really some very incompetent people who are hanging on or people who shouldn't be because of this. Did you see any of that?

LANDBERG: No, I wouldn't say so. First of all, when I joined the Board, the Board by statute was not responsible for discrimination. EEOC [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission]. Then there was an office in the State Department that dealt with all those issues. It was taking on an average five years for the State Department to adjudicate one of these complaints. This had nothing to do with the fact that people went to court. Some of the things you are talking about are because women went to court. They might have had an outcome of a complaint or they made a complaint and it was denied by the Department and then they went to court and they won some of their cases in court. For example, the whole question of discrimination against women in the Foreign Service Examination? The Board had no responsibility for that, but while I was on the board, because of concerns about how slow the State Department was in resolving these disputes, the Congress amended the act and gave the Grievance Board concurrent jurisdiction based on whichever the grievant preferred to do to deal with those issues. So, a grievant could file in EEOC or they could file a grievance and pursue it with the Board. That went into effect when I had been on the Board for three or four years. It took several years for these things to wind their way through the system. I did deal with some. I think the number picked up in my last years on the Board, but there weren't a lot because it would have to be an issue that arose after the Act came into effect. That meant that the issue itself would have to go through the whole process of the State Department of an effort to resolve it and if it wasn't then it would have to go through some grievance process, and then it would be appealed to the Board. All that takes two or three years. It was only in the last years I was on the Board that those things were happening.

Your question is, does that result in a lot of incompetent people being retained in the Department? I don't know if I'm competent to answer the question. By and large, we dealt with individual cases. There were some group cases. You got cases of this or that group, of people? Sometimes when a bunch of people grieve a certain thing and it came to us as a bunch of separate cases, we occasionally put them all together and decided them together. So, it's hard to say. I think you have to take it in individual cases. Certainly the percentage of people who won a grievancwon meaning that there was some remedy imposed by the Board, which has a lot of authority, including to keep somebody in the Service, to reinstate them; it can order a promotioof significant remedy was like 20%, partly because a lot of Foreign Service officers don't make their case very well. They don't understand the rules of evidence or they don't understand that they can't just make a complaint, that if you make a complaint, you've got to have some evidence to back up your complaint. It's amazing how you can have such smart people who do such a poor job of representing themselves in a dispute. Most grievances involved are career-determining issues. Even when it's not a separation for cause, it's usually that somebody is grieving for expiration of time in class; and yet very few Foreign Service officers argue themselves well. I understand what's happening is the number of grievances has declined because the agencies are settling more. But the ones that do come to the Board more and more are represented by lawyers. This was a trend beginning when I was there. There is no question that you're better off. If your career is in jeopardy, you ought to have a lawyer. There were 20% of those cases I saw where somebody had really been screwed by the system and where it wasn't that they were incompetent; it was that they got fossilized because they spoke up when an ambassador was trying to screw somebody because they disagreed with him or because some happenstance where somebody got in a position.. The classic grievance case that determines how we handle many remedies was a young woman whose performance file was not put before the promotion boards because of an administration error for four consecutive years. I never actually read the entire case file. I read the court decisions. I practically memorized the court decisions. For some reason, as her class progressed, they neglected to put her file before the promotion board. I don't know how that could have happened, but it did. So, what she saw over a period of these four years was that her colleagues started being promoted. Finally, at the end of four years, everybody had been promoted but her. They found an error and the agency admitted the error. She filed a grievance. They discovered the error and they acknowledged the error. They said, "But there is no proof you would be promoted," which is ludicrous. The State Department insisted on that. It was up to her to prove she would have been promoted during that time if her file had been put before a promotion board. The Grievance Board (this was before my time) denied her grievance on the basis that the burden of proof rested upon her. She went to court. The Act allows a grievant whose decision is adverse by the Grievance Board to appeal to the federal district court. She appealed. The federal district court said that basically everybody in her class had been promoted, that it was pure administrative error acknowledged by the agency, she had good, even excellent, performance ratings, and that the burden of proof in the case of an agency error should not rest upon the individual but that the burden should rest upon the agency to prove that if other things had been the same, she would still not have been promoted. The State Department appealed that decision to the circuit court of appeals. The circuit court of appeals wrote its own decisioit didn't just uphold the previous decisioso that the burden of proof was by law, by court decision, shifted then in the case of agency error. This is a class case. Do you keep an incompetent person in the State Department because they filed a grievance? Here was a woman who had some serious error. The answer is, those errors do occur, wrongs do occur, in which case you can have a perfectly competent person who somehow gets either innocently or not innocently screwed by the system. The Board's role is to protect the interests? This has a morale effect on the Foreign Service. When I was in Bosnia, I rode with a guy who had had a grievance. He came before the Board on appeal and won his grievance. He said, "You know that you have a court of appeal that's objective and you'll have your day in court. Any Foreign Service officer like me had never even heard of a grievance process, to tell you the truth." Any Foreign Service officer should not, if they can avoid it, file a grievance. That doesn't have anything to do with it. But if you have to, you can have your day in court. That includes plenty of competent people.

Q: I was thinking more of the? It's usually a case of claiming discrimination.

LANDBERG: Those are hard cases to make. You have to have evidence.

Q: Again and again, you hear about these cases where the Department won't give in and keeps going when there has obviously been something unfair done.

LANDBERG: Often, it's the remedy. Some of the remedies can be quite expensive. I've always felt? I never worked in Personnel or Administration in my entire career. Everything I know about personnel management would fit in my thumbnail. I don't know very much about the inner workings about the State Department's personnel and administrative bureaucracy, aside from the fact that we all lived in this system. I always had a suspicion that in some cases it was because of budget. For example, a security officer brought a grievance because he said that the overtime arrangements for security officers violated the Fair Labor Standards Act. As I believe, the agency agreed after a grievance and everything that he was entitled to compensation. When he did that, like 100 other Foreign Service security officers filed grievances, which compounded it. But he claimed under the Fair Labor Standards Act that he was entitled to double the penalty. He claimed that he was entitled to twice the amount that he was due under the Fair Labor Standards Act. He filed a grievance. The agency denied that, said, "No, we don't agree with that." It was a matter of interpretation of the Fair Labor Standards Act. We're talking about $10-20,000 each by 100 people. That's one to two million dollars. Double that is another couple million dollars. So, what's the agency going to do? Are they going to say, "Oh, yes, we agree." Then you go to the budget people and you know what the budget situation is in the State Department. You go in and say, "We need another couple million dollars to pay our security agents" and they say, "Nothing doing." So, the guy appealed and won his grievance. It gets more complicated than that after that. In any event, I always felt there were cases where money was involved where the budget people would say, "Nothing doing. We're not going to pay something that's going to cost us several hundred thousand dollars." The result was that the Personnel people would gulp and the grievance officer would gulp and make the best case it could that they didn't deserve to be compensated. I think there were some cases like that. I think also it's the corporate psychology of the State Department, too, about complainers and that you're supposed to take your lumps and you don't complain and that kind of thing. Therefore, when somebody does, you're considered a whiner and that kind of thing. There's sort of a negative feeling about that. A lot of people came to me and said, "Don't you think grievants are basically complainers?" Some, but not all.

Q: Also, some people are essentially driven to it because they have no other recourse.

LANDBERG: That's right. I think it's a good system. It's certainly the case that there are a certain number of people that aren't suited for the Foreign Service or that run into some kind of problem of their own making. It's seldom that people win their grievances, although I've seen some that had such a good case they won their grievances? They sort of created their own problem, but were able to turn it against the agency and come up with enough good reason that the Board found in their favor. Those things happen.

On the other hand, there is the question of individual rights. As an employee, you have certain rights under the law and they're not supposed to be violated.

One of the first grievances I was ever involved in? We did these things in three-person panels. Usually, the chair of the panel is one of these arbitrators, but the decisions are written by the former FSOs. We had a case of a junior officer. His first post was as consular officer at some tiny embassy in Africa. The day after he arrived, the administrative officer drowned. All of a sudden, he was both consular officer and administrative officer in this embassy, his first assignment overseas. It was such a small place that they were very short on secretarial help and so the DCM persuaded him and his wife to have his wife come and work for him as secretary. In the first week, the DCM chased her around the desk. Things went from that to worse. The result was that he requested a curtailment. They wrote a bad efficiency report on him. Then he went to another terrible post where he was in the consular section and the consul and the DCM were feuding. He got caught in the middle of that and suffered because of it because the DCM was the reviewing officer. So he finally got screwed. It was no fault of his own that the administrative officer drowned or that the DCM got the hots for his wife. So, we found in his favor. He did get promoted. It was a tenure decision. We said, "You've got to give him another two years at a normal place." I don't remember his name. I don't know who he is. I have no idea what happened to him. But I don't think it was his fault. Maybe you'd say, "Well, a good officer would have found his way out of those things," but not always. I always felt good if we found a worthy case where we could do something for somebody. But unfortunately, many cases were not well argued and many cases didn't have merit. So, only a minority of people won their grievances before the Board. That was the reality.

So, that's the end of my career.

Q: Okay. We'll stop at this point. Great. Thank you.

End of interview